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Mr. Faversham's New Year's Guest

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MR. FAVERSHAM'S NEW YEAR'S GUEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ELLEN CLINTON," "MERTONSVILLE PARK," &c.

We only heavier make our cross,
By wringing tears from every loss.

When things are at the worst, they sometimes mend.

London:
JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13, FLEET STREET, E.C.
HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.
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MR. FAVERSHAM'S NEW YEAR'S GUEST.

CHAPTER I.

"He that can please nobody is not so much to be pitied as he that nobody can please."—COLTON.

"When we suffer grief, like a canker, to eat into the soul, and, like a fire in the bones, to consume the marrow and drink up the spirits, we are accessory to the wrong done both to our bodies and souls; we waste our own candle, and put out our light."—SIBBES.

IT was the first of January, 18—

But to Mr. Faversham all days were alike!

He had taken his usual solitary walk, and was now returning through the picturesque village of Eastwicke (situated in one of the Midland counties of England) on his way to Faversham Hall, a large, castellated building, which had belonged to his family for many successive generations.

A stern, uncompromising old man he looked as he pursued his way—his eyes

never once glancing aside to note the festive preparations so obviously going on around him; or the gaily decorated cottages, with their rustic porches, and curiously shaped windows, tastefully ornamented with holly and ivy; or the happy faces of their occupants, as they gave or received some word of kindly greeting when passing one another in the village street. What cared Mr. Faversham for any of these things! *He* had no social gathering to look forward to—no loving friends to welcome with outstretched hands and words of tender sympathy. Therefore he despised all these childish sentiments himself, and refused to countenance them in others; and when (as now and then *did* happen, notwithstanding the forbidding aspect of his countenance) he was saluted with a respectful curtsey, or a timidly uttered, "A happy new year to you, squire," he neither by word or look responded to the well-meant civility of his humble neighbours.

But it had not been always thus; for though in his early youth his manner was characterised by a certain amount of re-

serve, and even suspiciousness, yet in the course of time this peculiarity became much less marked, and after his marriage with a lady who possessed unbounded influence over him, his disposition seemed to have undergone a complete transformation.

No man in the country was *then* more popular than Mr. Faversham; rich and poor agreed in considering him worthy of their highest esteem, and the lapse of years served only to strengthen and confirm the exalted opinion they had formed of him.

But the summer-time of life cannot last for ever. Autumn's winds and winter's storms *will* come, disturbing the serenity of our most peaceful days, by robbing us of our fairest flowers, and turning our songs of gladness into the heart-rending moanings of despair.

Happy those who can recognise a Father's loving discipline in all these vicissitudes; who, amid the bright sunshine of prosperity, or the sorrow-laden cloud of adversity—whether surrounded by the tempestuous swellings of the storm-tossed ocean, or soothed by the soft-breathed melody of some

gentle zephyr—can still say—*The will of the Lord be done!*

Poor Mr. Faversham could *not* speak thus, when, after enjoying uninterrupted prosperity for more than twenty years, he suddenly found himself called upon to pass through the troubled waters of affliction.

His loving and devoted wife was in one moment snatched from his side; and ere he had time to recover from so cruel a shock, his only son, a young man of great promise, whom he loved with an affection which bordered on idolatry, was also taken from him without any previous warning (being killed by a fall from his horse), leaving the bereaved husband and father so stupefied with grief, that for some months it appeared doubtful whether he would ever recover from the effects of so crushing a calamity; and when he did at length succeed in rallying his scattered energies, it was evident to all that a great and deplorable change had taken place within him.

Sorrow, instead of producing a softening impression upon a spirit which was naturally somewhat rugged and austere, seemed only

to have rendered it more harsh and mistrustful; and, although for a time the remembrance of all that he had suffered induced others to exercise forbearance towards the unhappy man's manifold peculiarities and infirmities, their kind sympathy was so little appreciated, and so ungraciously received, that even his most intimate friends (repelled by his altered manner and the very decided disinclination manifested for their society) soon left him to the solitude he appeared so inordinately to desire.

Notwithstanding the terrible losses, however, which Mr. Faversham had sustained, one child—an enthusiastic and high-spirited girl—still remained to him. She was in Paris at the time of her mother's death, and as it had been previously arranged that she should continue there another year, Mr. Faversham evinced no anxiety to shorten the period of their separation.

This proved a grievous mistake; for if, instead of brooding over his woes alone, he had been cheered by the companionship of his warm-hearted and affectionate daughter during the first freshness of their mutual

bereavements, he would probably have seen cause to be thankful that *she* at least was spared; but it unfortunately happened that twelve long months of loneliness and grief had done the work of years upon his darkened spirit, and when Ellen Faversham returned to her once happy home she discovered that its charm had indeed been broken.

She was greeted by her father with such cold, apathetic indifference, that her young heart was chilled; and though she struggled hard to rise above the various depressing influences which surrounded her, and exerted herself to dispel the gloom that hung like a heavy pall over the dwelling which had formerly been so full of brightness and joy, she could not disguise from herself the melancholy fact that, try as she would, she really accomplished nothing. No deed or word of hers ever had the effect of eliciting a single look of approbation from her stern and unapproachable parent, whose morbid reserve of disposition appeared rather to increase than diminish when in her presence.

Never until then had the poor girl fully

realised the value of the mother she had lost. *She* it was who had been the presiding spirit of Faversham, and virtually held the reins of domestic government; though, unlike some women, she carefully refrained from exhibiting her power, and would not acknowledge her own superiority even to herself.

Under *her* judicious management, everything had flowed smoothly and harmoniously on from one year to another, without a question being raised as to *who* was the originator of plans in the execution of which Mr. Faversham had not taken the smallest part, but for which he invariably received credit, nothing doubting that he had really been, from first to last, the principal actor in the whole affair.

How changed everything now was, in that formerly well-ordered household!

Mr. Faversham, not possessing sufficient energy of purpose to enable him to *surmount* difficulties, always chose the easiest mode of extricating himself from them, without personal inconvenience. When, therefore, he discovered that, owing to the want of

efficient supervision, various disturbing elements were at work in his establishment, instead of instituting any inquiry into the matter, or seeking to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent, he summarily dismissed all his servants; thus meting out to those whose faithfulness and fidelity in the past ought to have exempted them from the faintest shadow of suspicion, the very same measure as he awarded to others who had only lately entered his service, and of whose previous conduct he literally knew nothing.

In like manner, also, he had reason (or fancied so) to believe that his coachman, who had lived with him for upwards of twenty years, was dishonest; upon the strength of which supposition he unhesitatingly discharged him, and then—incredible though it may appear—he actually sold off his horses! preferring rather to go on foot than expose himself to the annoyance of being driven by a stranger, who would in all probability (so he argued) turn out as bad, if not worse, than his predecessor; and Ellen Faversham's surprise may be better

imagined than portrayed when, on reaching her father's house after her lengthened stay on the continent, she found *not one* of the old domestics of the family (whom she had been accustomed from her infancy to consider almost as stationary as the very walls themselves) waiting to receive her as she crossed the threshold.

In their place stood two women-servants. *One*, a grim-visaged, hard-featured, elderly individual, who united in her own person the functions of housekeeper and cook; the *other*, a pale-faced, unhappy-looking girl, over whom she evidently exercised an iron sway.

This was the extent of Mr. Faversham's establishment at that time, and thus it had continued during many succeeding years, the only difference being, that whereas the first-mentioned personage remained a fixture, the same could not be said of her assistant; as, in consequence of her failing to meet with any one who would submit to her tyrannical inflictions for more than a month or two together, she was reduced to the necessity of paying constant visits to a

neighbouring town, for the purpose of enlisting some fresh recruit, who would in her turn speedily make way for another; and all through this long series of changes, Mr. Faversham continued unmoved, merely shaking his head when he heard of the defection of his victimised servants, and enveloping himself in a thicker robe of coldness and impenetrable reserve when his daughter ventured to suggest that such an unsatisfactory state of things need not be tolerated, if only he would allow her to take proper measures for removing the cause of so much annoyance.

CHAPTER II.

"Long thus he chawd the cud of inward griefe,
And did consume his gall with anguish sore;
Still when he mused on his late mischiefe,
Then still the smart thereof increased more,
And seemed more grievous than it was before."

It is scarcely to be wondered at that the atmosphere of her father's house should have proved peculiarly uncongenial to a girl of Ellen Faversham's lively and energetic temperament.

Her buoyancy of disposition supported her for a while, but even that failed her at length, when she discovered that all her efforts to bring about some kind of reform in their disorganised establishment met with the most determined opposition on the part of Mr. Faversham.

Had she been so disposed she might certainly have availed herself of the various invitations she received from many of her old acquaintances, and sought elsewhere the

advantages and amusements which were denied her in her own home; but she was too proud to visit those whom she had been wont to meet under such widely different circumstances, and her independent spirit rendered her also averse to receiving hospitality which she had no means of returning; and the pitying looks, and kindly-intentioned, though sometimes injudiciously uttered, expressions of sympathy and commiseration which were bestowed on her by the few friends whom she did occasionally meet were so very painful to her feelings, that rather than endure their compassion, she preferred submitting to the dull monotony of her solitary life at Faversham.

She was for a considerable time at a loss to understand *why* her father, who had formerly shown her nothing but kindness and affection, should now regard her with such evident coldness and mistrust. "Could it be," she asked herself, "that he had really ceased to take any interest in her? or was his strange behaviour merely the result of some mental aberration, which led him to

lose sight of the claims she undoubtedly had upon his fatherly care and protection?"

Slowly but surely the truth dawned upon her. She could not help noticing that the very sight of her often brought a deeper shadow upon his careworn brow; and a few stray words which one day fell from his lips served to explain the cause.

"Why was *she* spared," she heard him mutter to himself, while his face wore a look of concentrated sternness, "when *others* whose lives were of so much more value were taken? Why was she spared," he repeated, pressing his thin lips closer together, "to add to my misery by reminding me of *them?* *She* cannot inherit my estates, or perpetuate my name, and yet *she* is here full of health and vigour; while *he*, my darling boy—my heir, my pride—is gone. Oh, it is too cruel—too cruel!"

And the poor, misguided man covered his face and groaned aloud, in the bitterness of his spirit; while his unfortunate daughter, of whose presence he was not even conscious, embraced the opportunity of escaping to her own apartment, to muse

over the difficulties of her position, and try, as she had often done before, to devise some means of softening Mr. Faversham's prejudices, and leading him to take a more patient and resigned view of all that had befallen him.

Alas! it was of no avail. No earthly power could melt that stubborn, rebellious spirit; and after many months of ceaseless anxiety on the part of Ellen Faversham, she was suddenly prostrated by sickness. The strain upon her nervous system had been too much for her, and she was reluctantly compelled to abandon all further exertion, and remain a passive sufferer—the victim of circumstances over which she had no control.

It has been truly said that *None are all evil*; and Crossley—Mr. Faversham's unprepossessing housekeeper—was no exception to the rule.

Strangely enough she conceived the most extraordinary liking for her young mistress the very first day she saw her; and although she knew that her sentiments were not in the slightest degree reciprocated by the

lady, who would in fact have been delighted could she have succeeded in dispensing with her services, yet this had no effect in lessening her own attachment; and the curious way she sometimes had of testifying her respect and affection for one so much above her in the social scale, reminded Ellen of an ill-natured mastiff, who, while presenting himself in his most savage aspect to every one else, turns with a look of protective fondness to greet his recognised owner.

But for *her* kind offices, during this season of weakness, poor Ellen would have been sadly neglected; for, after the first careless inquiry as to the cause of her non-appearance, Mr. Faversham relapsed into his usual state of apathetic indifference, and manifested little concern regarding the issue of her sickness.

On Crossley, therefore, devolved everything. She it was who sent off in haste for the village doctor, and devoted herself to the task of carrying out his orders when he arrived. She it was who sat up with the unconscious girl night after night, during the severe attack of brain fever which

followed the first unfavourable symptoms, and it was probably to *her* unwearied watchfulness and attention, under Providence, that Ellen Faversham owed her life.

Dr. Wilford, too, her medical attendant, was both skilful and intelligent, and, having daughters of his own, could feel for the fair young creature, who had been so early deprived of all that makes life pleasant and desirable, and yet had bravely striven to bear her appointed burden alone, without asking or expecting either help or sympathy from any one.

He plainly saw that there was no prospect of her being perfectly restored to health, so long as she remained within the gloomy precincts of her present residence, and he only waited until she should recover from the more dangerous part of her illness, and be able to travel without risk, before ordering her immediate change of air.

Mr. Faversham strongly objected to this proposal in the first instance, but Dr. Wilford succeeded at length in persuading him into yielding an ungracious assent; and it was finally arranged that Ellen should

accept the oft-repeated invitation of an aunt of hers who was just then in Brighton, and join her there without delay.

Having reluctantly accorded her this permission, Mr. Faversham considered he had done all that was necessary, and gave himself no further trouble in the matter; but the kind-hearted doctor, who saw that unless prompt measures were taken by some one, his patient would still be left to languish amid the dreariness and solitude of her comfortless home, did everything in his power to facilitate her departure; and a load of care seemed lifted from his mind when at last he accompanied her to the railway-station, and saw her fairly off under the protection of friends, who had promised to do their utmost to render her journey less wearisome than it might otherwise have proved to one in her enfeebled condition.

Dr. Wilford's expectations as to the result of this visit were fully realised; for in the course of a few weeks there was a very perceptible improvement in the state of Ellen Faversham's health. Her old sprightliness of manner had returned with increasing

strength, while her erewhile pallid cheeks once more regained their colour, and the sunny smile, which had been so rarely seen of late, now lighted up her countenance with almost the same gladsomeness and frequency as in the days of yore.

Her relations, being naturally indignant at the extraordinary treatment she had received from her father, would not listen to her suggestion that she should return to him, even after she had entirely recovered her former health, and Ellen herself was too happy in their society to be really anxious to revisit scenes, the remembrance of which afforded her so much pain and vexation; though she could not help feeling somewhat uneasy when she thought of her infatuated parent, and wondered whether there would ever be any change for the better in the state of affairs at Faversham.

A few months later, and another and brighter home was offered her; and the beautiful young girl became the wife of one who was in every way worthy of her.

She did not enter upon this important step without making more than one effort

to ascertain her father's wishes on the subject ; but as he made a point of never answering her letters, and failed even to reply to the formal proposal which he received from the gentleman who sought his daughter's hand, Ellen accepted his silence as another proof of his extreme indifference, if not positive dislike, and commenced her preparations in the faint hope that she might still hear from him before the momentous day arrived.

That Mr. Faversham could possibly *object* to her marriage was a contingency which, fortunately for Ellen's peace of mind, neither she, nor the friends on whose judgment she had learnt most confidently to rely, contemplated for a single moment.

And yet it afterwards transpired that, for some unexplained reason, such would have been the case, had he given utterance to his real sentiments. He imagined, however, that by treating the matter as altogether beneath his notice, he should be taking the most effectual mode of putting a stop to the proceedings; and his anger knew no bounds when he discovered that his silence had

been construed into something widely different to what he intended, and that his daughter was actually married.

After spending some weeks on the continent, the young couple returned to Brighton, from whence Ellen, filled with the deepest thankfulness at her own great happiness, and earnestly longing to be of some use to her father, whom she only remembered with feelings of tenderness and pity, wrote to propose that she and her husband should pay him a visit at Faversham.

This was not the first time she had written to him since her marriage; but knowing his peculiarities, it caused her no surprise that he should not answer her letters, and on this occasion it was arranged that, having thus prepared him for their arrival, they should set out on their journey, without expecting to hear from him on the subject.

But ere they could carry their plan into execution, a sudden and unlooked-for obstacle appeared in their path!

Ellen received a letter from Mr. Faver-

sham, bitterly reproaching her for what had occurred; and saying that by marrying without his consent she had forfeited all claim to his notice, and therefore he intended from henceforth to hold no manner of intercourse either with her or her self-chosen husband.

He affected to believe that their eagerness to see him arose from interested motives; and in the strongest terms declared that they should never derive the smallest advantage, pecuniary or otherwise, from their relationship to himself.

Poor Ellen was utterly confounded when she perused this heartless communication, and her husband, who felt justly hurt and offended at more than one unfair inuendo, if not direct accusation, it contained in regard to *his* share of the transaction, advised her to take the angry man at his word, and make no further effort to conciliate one who was so obviously bent on maintaining his present unfriendly aspect towards them.

But the warm-hearted girl could not thus relinquish the hope of eventually being able to induce him to alter the unfavourable

opinion he had formed respecting them; and although her own extreme sensitiveness, conjoined with her husband's pride, prevented her from exposing herself to the humiliation of being refused admittance should she endeavour to obtain a personal interview with Mr. Faversham, yet she continued to write to him from time to time, and would have been most thankful could she have discovered any sign of relenting on his part, which might encourage her to persevere in her attempts to bring about a reconciliation.

Her letters, however, did not produce the faintest impression upon his mind; for, though he regularly read them, he as invariably destroyed them immediately afterwards; and even a final touching appeal which Ellen made him about five years previous to the commencement of my story, to the effect that she might be allowed to spend a few days with him before leaving England for an indefinite period—her husband, who was in the army, having been ordered abroad—elicited no response from her infatuated parent.

Then she gave up all hope, and ceased to hold any further communication with him; so that Mr. Faversham had now no means of knowing (however much he might have wished it) where she was, or how situated.

CHAPTER III.

" There is, in every human heart
Some not completely barren part,
Where seeds of love and truth might grow,
And flowers of generous virtue blow;
To plant, to watch, to water there,
This be our duty—be our care." BOWRING.

As Mr. Faversham took his accustomed walk on the memorable new year's morning referred to in my first chapter, his thoughts, notwithstanding his habitual self-control, *would* occasionally revert to the past; and a slight—very slight—twinge of conscience visited him at the recollection of the various occasions on which he had repulsed his daughter's advances, and ascribed the very worst motives to whatever she or her husband proposed. But he speedily checked himself when he found his thoughts wandering in such an unusual direction, and went on his way with quickened footsteps, and a more determined expression upon his care-laden

countenance, until he reached the entrance to his own domain.

When within a few yards of his gates, he suddenly came upon two children—a boy and a girl—the former about twelve years of age, the latter somewhat younger; bearing between them an immense basket, filled with branches of holly, ivy, and other variegated shrubs.

Directly his keen eye lighted on them, he paused, and, addressing the boy, said sternly, "Have you been trespassing on my grounds?"

"Your grounds, indeed!" answered the other with scant reverence; while his sister crept closer to his side, as if fearing some outbreak from the angry-looking man. "I should rather think *not*."

"Where did this come from, then?" persisted Mr. Faversham, pointing to the contents of the basket.

"From Squire Welford's gardener," was the short reply. "The Squire always allows us to get flowers and holly to decorate the school-room where we have our new year's dinner."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the gentleman, wishing he had not asked the question.

"*He* is a kinder man than you," continued the boy, with more bluntness than politeness.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Faversham, advancing a step nearer, and regarding him with a glance of fierce displeasure.

"*He* would never think of *prosecuting* a poor boy because he happened to pass through his grounds by mistake!" pursued the lad, nothing daunted.

His reference to what had really occurred only a few weeks previously might have enraged Mr. Faversham still further if he had been allowed one moment's reflection; but the audacious boy suddenly brought his uncomplimentary remarks to an abrupt conclusion, by turning to his sister, and saying, "Come along, Lizzie; we shall be late if we don't take care."

And resuming possession of the basket he marched home, accompanied by the timid little girl, whose half-scared, frightened look, as she glanced in the direction of the stern

old man, awakened a fresh train of thought in his disordered mind.

The impertinence of his young censurer was no longer considered worthy of notice (in fact, he had been rather accustomed to *pride himself* upon his unpopularity, especially among the juvenile portion of the community, whose delinquencies he was wont to punish with the most rigorous severity), but a strangely unaccountable sensation came over him as he caught sight of the shrinking, terrified expression of that little fair face; and, after watching their retreating figures for the space of a few seconds, he turned away, with a vague consciousness that there must be something decidedly repulsive in his own aspect, to call forth such unequivocal symptoms of alarm on the part of so simple and apparently unsophisticated a child, and for once in his life he actually felt a certain amount of dissatisfaction *with himself*.

Could it be that there were tender chords still unbroken within his desolate heart—some soft spot yet remaining, where all seemed withered and dead—some incom-

prehensible yearning, unsuspected both by himself and others, for the affection which he had so often and ruthlessly rejected in times past?

Let us follow him to his home and see.

As he opened one of the rusty iron gates leading into his neglected avenue, an old woman, attracted by the sound of its creaking hinges, came limping out of a dilapidated building (formerly a pretty Gothic lodge), for the purpose of ascertaining who the intruder might be.

"I was in hopes it was some one else," she muttered in a discontented undertone, on getting sight of Mr. Faversham; "it's awfully lonesome here, with not a soul to speak to, especially on New Year's-day!"

And she hobbled back into her uncomfortable dwelling as fast as her rheumatic limbs would permit, and, drawing a rickety stool close up to the miserable fire, began to sigh over her increasing infirmities, and wonder for the twentieth time that morning whether any of her village acquaintances would remember her inability to visit them, and spare an hour or two from their own

festivities, to afford her what they all knew she dearly liked—an opportunity of hearing any news which might be stirring in the neighbourhood.

Poor old Peggy Morison! we must not judge her too harshly. Her life had been made up of many sorrows and few joys. Relatives she had none—husband and children being all dead—and for years her days had been passed in loneliness and poverty; for Mr. Faversham (who, when breaking up his establishment, would fain have driven her also from his premises, had it not been for a long-standing promise made by his late father that she should be permitted to retain possession of the *then* comfortable lodge until her death, in consequence of some important service which her husband had rendered him when a lad) had gone on reducing the amount of her weekly allowance, until the pittance she received was barely sufficient, to use her own language, to keep body and soul together. As, moreover, he absolutely refused to expend anything towards keeping the cottage in repair,

the broken windows, leaky roof, and other serious disadvantages soon began to tell upon the poor woman's aged frame; and she was now a constant sufferer from rheumatism, and often disabled for days together from doing any kind of work, except such as was positively indispensable for her own immediate wants, without obtaining the slightest relief, or even sympathy, either from Mr. Faversham or his parsimonious housekeeper.

Occasionally Peggy received a cautiously worded suggestion from some of her well-wishers in the village, that she would be better cared for in the workhouse; but the poor creature, notwithstanding her age and increasing feebleness, indignantly rejected the idea of being persuaded into ending her days in so ignominious a manner.

To return to Mr. Faversham. Instead of proceeding straight towards his house, he prolonged his walk somewhat, by diverging into a narrow pathway, which led into the neglected and overgrown shrubberies. From thence he went on through uncul-

tivated fields, and devastated parterres, apparently quite unobservant of the gloom and desolation that prevailed around him.

At last he reached the house, which looked very dull and comfortless, with all the principal windows closely shuttered, and no sign of life visible, except such as might be inferred from the smoke issuing from one solitary chimney.

Having passed through a wide vestibule which spoke of decayed grandeur, and paused for a moment in the dimly lighted hall to divest himself of his overcoat, he entered a room at the rear of the house, which must formerly have been bright and pleasant; for even yet, in spite of the threadbare carpet, dingy paper, and untastefully-arranged furniture, it looked tolerably cheerful, with its lofty ceiling, fretted cornices, and large bow-window, opening upon a wide spreading lawn, now, alas! all unkept and overgrown.

Seating himself in a well-worn easy chair, which occupied a prominent position in front of the fire, Mr. Faversham took up a book, and appeared to read. His face still retained

a strangely troubled and dissatisfied expression, and from time to time he lifted his eyes from his page before him, and gazed abstractedly into the fire.

By-and-by he was summoned to his solitary dinner, and rising from his seat he stepped into an adjoining room—a large, dusky, fireless apartment, which bore such evident tokens of neglect, that the very portraits of his ancestors seemed to look reproachfully down upon him, from out of their massive but tarnished and dust covered gilt frames.

When he had concluded his simple repast, the lonely old man resumed his former place in the small library which was his usual sitting-room, and leaning back in his chair, he soon became wrapt in a state of semi-unconsciousness, if not profound slumber.

While he thus continued oblivious to all around, the library door was carefully opened by a gentle hand, and then as noiselessly reclosed.

Mr. Faversham could not have been cognisant of the movement, and yet, when he awoke the next moment, startled by a some-

what rude greeting from the fire, which (apparently resenting his negligence in omitting to attend to its requirements) took the present opportunity of adjusting itself by collapsing with considerable noise, he glanced around him in an expectant, bewildered fashion, with an indescribable impression upon his mind that something was about to happen.

The room would have been entirely shrouded in darkness, but for the illumination just caused by the sudden lighting up of the recently flameless fire.

This enabled him to distinguish every object with perfect clearness; and as his restless eyes wandered from one thing to another, and then returned to the vicinage of his own chair, he saw—or was he only dreaming?—a little child standing beside him—a fairy-like creature, with a sweet, innocent face, soft blue eyes, which were gravely fixed upon his rugged countenance, and long, shining curls brushed back from a pure white forehead.

CHAPTER IV.

"There are some bosoms dark and drear
Which an unwatered desert are;
Yet there a curious eye may trace
Some silent spot, some verdant place,
Where little flowers, the weeds between,
Spend their soft fragrance all unseen."

BOWRING.

BEFORE Mr. Faversham could recover from the astonishment caused by this unexpected apparition, the youthful intruder advanced a step nearer, and, laying a small dimpled hand upon his bony arm, exclaimed, in a childish, lisping voice, "Are you the mis'able man?"

The miserable man! How the words thrilled through his frame! *Was* he miserable? It had never occurred to him to ask himself the question before, and for some seconds he remained speechless, startled by the suddenness of the shock produced upon his wavering imagination.

Then he turned sharply round, and, after

rubbing his eyes to make sure that it was no mere illusion of the senses, he regarded the child with a keen observant look, mingled with a certain amount of awe; and finally, seizing a match, he proceeded with trembling fingers to light the one solitary candle which stood ready for use upon the table. This done, he again examined his young visitor with an appearance of extreme perplexity, wondering who she could be, and how she came to find her way into his presence.

She meanwhile had been watching his movements with infantile curiosity, but now she evidently considered it time for him to reply to her question. Accordingly she repeated it, and there was a slight touch of childish impatience in her tone which would have amused many, but only added to Mr. Faversham's amazement.

His pride rebelled against this extraordinary querist, but he nevertheless found himself powerless to break the spell which she had so mysteriously thrown around him, and when he presently addressed her, it was in a voice which sounded, even to his own

ears, strangely softened and subdued, "What makes you ask me such a question?" and he leant forward and eagerly awaited her reply.

"'Cause I p'omised I would try and comfort the mis'able man."

"Who did you promise?" demanded Mr. Faversham, more and more puzzled.

"My mamma," was the simple rejoinder.

"Where *is* your mamma?" inquired the gentleman, becoming quite interested in his unknown visitor.

"Gone away," replied the child, shaking her golden curls.

"Have you got a papa as well as a mamma?" was the old man's next question.

"'Course I have!" replied the child, opening her blue eyes, as if surprised at the inquiry.

"And where is *he?*"

"Gone away, too;" and there was a slight quiver in the little voice; "but Lily will be good," she added quickly, "and stay wif you."

"With me!" echoed Mr. Faversham in consternation, "what can she mean?" and

he turned his bewildered face towards the fire, with the air of one who seeks to solve some difficult problem.

"So your name is Lily!" he remarked, after a thoughtful pause, "Lily *what?*"

"Just mamma's Lily," returned the child in a tone of artless decision which afforded very limited information to her mystified companion, who once more averted his gaze, and relapsed into silence.

But his meditations were soon interrupted by a piteous voice exclaiming, "Lily's tired —p'ease take me up."

And, by way of enforcing her words, she lifted her little arms quite naturally, nothing doubting that the appeal would be instantly responded to.

Poor Mr. Faversham was greatly embarrassed on being called upon to occupy so anomalous a position. "What right had this strange child in his library at all?" he asked himself, "much less to expect him to condescend to the office of a nurse! It was too ridiculous. He would not submit to so unreasonable an imposition—in fact, he would put up with her society no longer,

but ring the bell and order his servant to remove her from the house."

Thus he resolved; but one look at that lovely upturned face, with its soft blue eyes gazing beseechingly into his own, and that tiny rosebud mouth half parted in a smile, had the effect of entirely altering his determination. He could *not* resist the eloquent appeal, and, almost without knowing what he did, he stooped down, and lifted the fairy-like creature on to his knee, and she pillowed her head upon his breast with the same unsuspecting confidence as though she had been in her mother's arms.

This mute token of dependence touched Mr. Faversham acutely; and when after the lapse of a few minutes he saw that she had fallen into a light sleep, he sat perfectly still, afraid almost to move or even to breathe lest he should disturb her.

"*She* does not fear me," he murmured softly to himself, as he gazed down upon the sweet little face half hidden by its golden curls. And then his mind again reverted to the scene of the morning, and while he contrasted the shrinking, frightened expression

which sat upon that *other* child's face with the winning, confiding manner of this smaller, and far lovelier specimen of youthful ingenuousness, his arm involuntarily tightened around her slight form, and an odd thrill of emotion quivered at his heart.

By-and-by the bright eyes unclosed, and Lily's lisping voice was heard asking, "Are I good?"

Mr. Faversham started. His thoughts had been far away. Long-buried memories had suddenly arisen from their tomb, awakened as by the touch of inspiration, and the scenes of other days were passing before his mental vision with the rapidity and clearness of a panoramic view; so that for the moment he had forgotten the presence of his unknown visitor.

Hearing her voice, however, he looked at her with a dubious expression, and in answer to her question said in a surprised tone, "Good? Yes, I am sure you are."

The child smiled, a placid, contented smile; and after a short pause, during which she eyed him with an appearance of grave consideration, she again broke the silence

by saying abruptly, "What s'all Lily call you?"

"I really do not know," replied the old man, absently.

"Then I t'ink I'll call you *ganpa*," she exclaimed with the triumphant air of one who has suddenly become possessed of a *very* bright idea, "'cause you 'mind me of my *own* ganpa."

"How do I remind you of your grandpapa?" inquired Mr. Faversham, trying to smother a sigh.

"He is all white here," touching the snowy chin, "just like you. Ganpa loves Lily," added the little one presently; "does *you* love Lily?"

What could he say! At first some short, evasive reply rose to his lips, but the serious, expectant look upon that innocent face checked him; and after a momentary struggle with himself he laid his hand gently, almost caressingly, upon the pretty round head, and a smile, such as his countenance had not worn for many a long year, softened the austerity of his rugged features, as he responded to the childish appeal.

And Lily—to whom love was as necessary as sunshine is to the flowers—apparently saw no reason to be otherwise than satisfied at the result of her investigation, for she nestled contentedly back in his arms, looking—and it is to be presumed *feeling*—quite at ease with the unsocial and incomprehensible man, who had hitherto contrived to keep every one at so great a distance.

Again followed an interval of silence, interrupted at length by a low tap at the door, instantly succeeded by the entrance of the housemaid—a pleasant-faced girl, who had only lately become an inmate of the Hall.

She opened her lips to speak; but the sight which met her astonished gaze petrified her into dumbness, and she continued to stand, fixed and statue-like, just inside the door, staring with wide-open eyes upon the unexpected scene.

Could *that* be her stern, unapproachable master, sitting there nursing a child! And, as she asked herself the question, her astonishment and perplexity deepened and increased to such a degree that Mr. Faver-

sham, noticing the peculiarity of her manner, and perhaps divining its cause, asked in a slightly irritable tone—depositing the child upon the hearth-rug, and rising to his own feet as he spoke—"What did you want, Mary?"

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed (making a violent effort to recover from the state of mental confusion into which she had been so suddenly plunged), "I forgot—I was going to ask you about this box." And hastily leaving the room she returned the next instant with a moderate-sized leather-covered trunk. "What am I to do with it?"

It was now Mr. Faversham's turn to look bewildered. He eyed first herself, then the article she referred to, and finally demanded, "Where did this come from?"

"That's just what I can't tell you, sir," said the servant with a mysterious shake of the head; "I heard the hall-door bell ring, and went immediately to answer it, but found no one there—only this box!"

"What do you mean?" queried her master, glancing sharply at her.

"It stood upon the top step," she explained, "and not a soul was in sight, for I ran half way down the avenue, to try and find out who had brought it."

Once more Mr. Faversham turned his keen searching gaze upon her, as if he would fain discover whether her statement could be relied on; but she bore his scrutiny without flinching, having evidently nothing either to disguise or conceal.

"That's Lily's box!" here interposed the child, with artless simplicity.

"Lily's box!" mechanically repeated Mr. Faversham, surprise and dismay depicted on every feature, while the housemaid started on hearing the clear silvery tones, and looked questioningly at her master, in order to assure herself that she had heard aright.

"Do you know anything about this child?" he inquired, dropping his voice somewhat, as he pointed towards the demure little figure now standing contentedly in front of the fire.

"I, sir?" replied the wondering girl, with a rapid glance which took note of

everything—from the soft silken ringlets to the dainty little feet, incased in kid boots of such tiny dimensions that it seemed almost impossible for any feet, however small, to inhabit them—"no, sir, I never saw her in my life until this moment."

"Who admitted her, then?" was Mr. Faversham's next perturbed inquiry.

"I'm sure I couldn't say," returned his no less perplexed servant; "it was certainly not me."

"Very strange!" mused the gentleman, with an involuntary contraction of his brows; "I scarcely know what is to be done with her. However, you may go now, Mary," he added, resuming his old stiffness of demeanour; "and perhaps you had better send Mrs. Crossley here."

"She is gone to see her sister, who lives in the village, sir, and will not be home until late."

"Ah, yes! I remember now; she always spends New Year's-day with her," observed Mr. Faversham, scarcely knowing whether to be annoyed or relieved at being thus thrown upon his own resources.

While he was pondering what steps he ought to take, and Mary was wondering who the unknown visitor could be, and how she had succeeded in finding her way to the old gentleman's room, the object of their consideration arranged matters for herself by saying, in a tone which showed that she was accustomed to be attended to—"Lily wants her tea."

Here was another emergency for which Mr. Faversham was quite unprepared; but Mary, who felt more at home on this point, advanced a step nearer the child, and asked in a voice of kindness, which instantly inspired confidence, "What would Miss Lily like for her tea?"

"B'ead and milk," lisped the little one.

The good-natured servant turned once again to Mr. Faversham, as if awaiting his instructions.

"Better get her some," was his concise rejoinder.

"Very well, sir," said Mary, going to the fire, and adding fresh coals; "it will soon be ready," and she hastily quitted the apartment.

Ere long she returned, and asked in a half frightened, half pleading voice, apparently fearing what the result of her suggestion would be, "If you please, sir, might I bring the tea in here? It is beginning to snow, and I am afraid the young lady would find it very cold in the other room."

It required no little courage for her to make this proposition; for she was aware of the pertinacity with which Mr. Faversham clung to his own ways and opinions, and that no one had ever before presumed to interfere with this particular crotchet, which he had for so considerable a period adhered to, of invariably taking his meals in a fireless room, even in the very depth of winter. But though he felt inclined to resent her interposition on this occasion, and was almost on the point of negativing the kindly-meant proposal, a glance at the little fragile being now amusing herself with a frightfully ugly tabby cat—the only thing in the shape of a pet which was ever permitted to enter the house (and *that*, it may be mentioned *en passant*, would not have been tolerated but for the fact of its being

a particular favourite of Crossley's)—made him yield a tolerably gracious assent, instead of the refusal he had meditated.

So that Mr. Faversham's meal that evening may be said to have been the first really cheerful one he had enjoyed throughout many long years of self-imposed loneliness and isolation.

Having discovered a beautifully carved tall chair in one of the unused apartments, Mary ventured to introduce it into the library, and placed the fair young stranger in it close beside the old gentleman at the tea-table.

He offered no resistance to this arrangement, but seemed on the contrary thoroughly interested in the child's prattle; gravely listening to every word she said, and attending to her wants with the most unconscious courtesy.

In the course of an hour or two, however, a new difficulty arose. The tea-things had been removed, and Mr. Faversham had resumed his former place with Lily on his knee, when she suddenly gave utterance to another most natural observation—

"Lily's very s'eepy, and t'inks she'll go to bed."

This announcement had the effect of throwing Mr. Faversham's mind into a fresh ferment. What steps to take he knew not, until at last it occurred to him that perhaps Mary, who had already proved her efficiency by helping him out of one embarrassing situation, might possibly be able to suggest some mode of getting over this difficulty also.

Accordingly he rang the bell.

"Mary," he said, in a half questioning voice, as soon as she had obeyed his summons, "the child is sleepy, and as it is growing late and the weather inclement, I suppose we ought to keep her here to-night."

"To be sure, sir," answered the girl briskly; "I can easily get a bed ready for her."

She took up the trunk as she spoke, and carried it away with her, and it was quite obvious from the brief space of time which elapsed between her exit and reappearance that she must have commenced her preparations long before.

"Now I'll say my p'ayers," remarked Lily,

when her kind-hearted attendant came forward to announce that everything was ready; and before Mr. Faversham could divine her intention, she sprang to the ground, and, kneeling down, folded her dimpled hands together, screwed up the round eyes very tightly, and said, softly—"P'ay God bress Lily, and make her a good child; and p'ay God bress papa and mamma, and ganpa, and"—here came a slight pause—"and *this* ganpa too, for Christ's sake. Amen. That's all," she added, nodding her head at Mary, as she rose from her knees. "Now I'll go to bed. Good night, ganpa," and she lifted the rose-bud mouth for a kiss so sweetly and lovingly, that Mr. Faversham, acting for once upon some generous impulse, stooped down, and, taking her in his arms, actually carried her himself to the room which had been prepared for her reception.

CHAPTER V.

"And such is man! a soil which breeds,
Or sweetest flowers, or vilest weeds—
Flowers lovely as the morning's light,
Weeds deadly as the aconite;
Just as his heart is trained to bear
The poisonous weed or floweret fair.

"Flow, then, pure knowledge, ever flow!
Change nature's face to man below;
A paradise once more disclose,
Make deserts bloom with Sharon's rose;
And, through a Saviour's blood once shed,
Raise his forlorn and drooping head."

"I THOUGHT it would be lonely for the little lady to be put into one of the large rooms, away from everybody, sir, and so I made up the small bed for her which stands in the next room to your own," observed Mary, as she preceded them up the wide staircase with a light.

She was rather apprehensive lest Mr. Faversham might be angry with her for taking this step; as, on one or two occasions, when Crossley happened to be in a more genial mood than usual, she had entered into some

particulars regarding their master's *former* mode of life, and explained that the room in question had never been occupied since the death of his idolised son, who had slept in it when quite a child.

However, Mr. Faversham gave utterance to no word of comment. What his real feelings were Mary could not, of course, divine; but she stole a look at him on entering the apartment, and was relieved to find that there were no marks of displeasure upon his countenance, though an irrepressible sigh escaped his lips as he delivered over his light burden to her care, and then turned hastily round, and retraced his steps to the library.

When there, he mechanically seated himself in his accustomed place, and began to muse over the events of the day. Many reflections obtruded themselves into his mind; but, whatever forms these reflections took, however often and widely they wandered from the present moment, they invariably returned to the same starting-point—the image of that fair child's face, with its clustering golden curls, and sweet infantile expression came athwart his every thought; while the

fragrance of her loving kiss still lingered on his lips, and the influence of her winning smile and innocent prattle encircled him like a ray of sunshine.

Suddenly his eye was attracted by something, he knew not what, which lay upon the old-fashioned sofa at the furthest extremity of the indifferently lighted room; and, rising deliberately, he walked over to see what it could be.

A little blue velvet pelisse trimmed with minever, a tiny muff of the same fur, a small round hat to correspond, together with a pair of soft warm gloves. This was all; but such a curiously blended look of tenderness and bewilderment crossed the old man's face as he surveyed the pretty costume! He held the muff suspended between his finger and thumb and gazed down on it with much the same intentness as though he had discovered the existence of some extraordinary and hitherto unheard-of being, and was now endeavouring to ascertain the class to which it properly belonged, by making himself thoroughly acquainted with all the minutiæ connected with its habits and requirements.

He was still standing thus, when Mary joined him, looking puzzled and perturbed.

"If you please, sir," she exclaimed earnestly, "would you be kind enough to come upstairs again? Miss Lily is crying, and I cannot tell what it is she wants."

Without making any reply Mr. Faversham instantly laid down the muff, and accompanied her to the bedroom, where he found a little white-robed figure sitting up in her cot, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Oh, ganpa," she cried out between her sobs, as soon as she saw him. "P'ease let me have my Polly. Mamma *p'omised* Lily should have her Polly to s'eep wif her, and now nursie, no, not nursie," with a little sigh, "Lily's got *no* nursie to night—that servant," pointing to Mary, "says she can't find it."

"What does she mean?" demanded Mr. Faversham of the housemaid.

"I cannot think, sir," she replied, half crying herself at the poor child's evident distress. "Do tell us what it is like, dear,"

she added, turning towards her and speaking in a kind, soothing tone.

But Lily was evidently too much excited to understand her; she only rocked herself to and fro, murmuring plaintively, "Mamma p'omised Lily should have Polly to s'eep wif her."

Mr. Faversham seemed greatly perplexed. He gazed long and wistfully at the child; then at Mary, and at length directed an inquiring glance around the room, as if in search of some mysterious object which might, peradventure, turn out to be the much-to-be-desired "Polly."

"Have you examined that thoroughly?" he asked, pointing to the black trunk, which stood wide open; "it may contain something she has been accustomed to."

"Oh, how stupid of me," answered the servant, a gleam of hope coming to her face at this suggestion. "I found the child's night things just inside the cover, and never thought of looking further. Now, Miss Lily, dear," she went on, addressing her in a cheerful tone, "I am going to take every-

thing out of your box; so don't cry any more, but tell me if you see your Polly."

So saying, she proceeded to empty the trunk, while Mr. Faversham stood by, watching her operations with undisguised interest. First, she removed the contents of the tray, bestrewing the floor with a promiscuous assortment of child's clothing, such as prettily trimmed white muslin pinafores; warm merino frocks, which skilful fingers had artistically braided; little stockings and shoes; hats, gloves, and handkerchiefs. Then the empty tray was taken out, and the other contents of the box overhauled. At last a mahogany ark-like receptacle, which filled the whole length of the trunk, made its appearance, whereat the occupant of the cot ceased her sobs, and clapping her small hands together, exclaimed joyously, "That's my Polly!".

It was surely some other and more laudable motive than mere curiosity which prompted Mr. Faversham to raise the lid of this strange-looking repository, in order to ascertain what its interior arrangements might be. He found that its principal

feature consisted of a deep, and somewhat peculiarly-shaped tray, which on being lifted out and placed upon the ground, formed a most comfortable doll's bedstead, and looked very pretty with its pink satin curtains and canopy, which could be raised or lowered at pleasure, and carved mahogany legs finished off with miniature ivory castors; while the under part of the box was fitted up with shelves and drawers, and appropriated to the doll's wardrobe.

"That's it!" reiterated Lily, who began to think the investigation had lasted quite long enough; "b'ing me my Polly."

"Why, it's a doll!" cried Mary, raising the quilted satin counterpane (which was made to correspond with the curtains and canopy), and disclosing a large waxen beauty quietly reposing amidst its snowy cushions; and, taking it gently up, she surveyed it in unfeigned admiration.

Then carrying it to its young mistress, she asked, "Why do you call it Polly?"

"'Cause that's its name," rejoined the child in a tone of dignified surprise. "Mamma calls *me Lily*, and I call my doll *Polly*,"

and after hugging it in her arms with every appearance of delight she laid it down on the pillow beside her, and said softly, "Hush! Polly's going to s'eep."

Her supposition seemed to be correct, for as they silently watched it, the object of her solicitude gradually closed its wide-open eyes, to her own intense satisfaction and the astonishment of Mr. Faversham, who, being profoundly ignorant of the mechanism of dolls in general, and this one in particular, had not expected that the child's words would be thus literally fulfilled.

"Lily's good now and won't kie no more," observed the quaint little maiden, following the example of her inanimate companion with an air of the utmost contentment; while Mr. Faversham, who scarcely knew whether he was sleeping or waking, retired to his former solitude.

"What will Mrs. Crossley say?" This was the burden of Mary's thoughts as she pursued her customary avocations during the remainder of that eventful evening. Any one else might be softened and conciliated; but *she*—— As well try to remove a moun-

tain, or change a lion into a lamb, as hope to mitigate *her* wrath, in case she should take upon herself to object to what has occurred.

It was, therefore, with considerable trepidation that the peacefully disposed girl at last recognised the sounds which generally heralded the housekeeper's approach.

On this occasion she fancied that the latch-key was turned more noisily than ever in the lock of the outer door; and there was something ominous in the undignified haste with which Mrs. Crossley rushed into the kitchen, knocking down a chair which happened to stand in her way, and ruthlessly endangering the limbs—if not the life—of her favourite tabby cat by treading heavily upon it, as it came sleepily forward to welcome her after her long absence.

One glance at her infuriated countenance showed that she was already aware of what had taken place.

"It must have been the milkman," muttered Mary, who suddenly remembered that in the excitement of the moment she had explained to him the circumstances under which she required to take in more milk

than usual that night; and no doubt he had spread the news through the village, until it had reached the house of Crossley's sister.

"What's this I hear about a child?" was the housekeeper's first abrupt exclamation, as she threw herself down upon a seat, panting and out of breath from her rapid walk.

Before Mary could make up her mind what reply to give, the question was repeated with still greater vehemence.

"Oh, Mrs. Crossley, you can't think what a pretty little thing it is," she said, at length, in a soothing, deprecating voice.

"Don't talk nonsense," remarked Mrs. Crossley, sharply, taking off her bonnet and flinging it on the table. "Pretty, forsooth! what is that to me, I should like to know? I'll soon put a stop to people trying to palm their children upon us, I can tell you; I'll have her sent to the workhouse, that's what I'll do, as sure as my name is Crossley!"

"The workhouse!" cried Mary, aghast at the very name; "why, it is evidently a lady's child!"

"Lady's child or not, it's all the same to me!" sneered the housekeeper. "How Mr.

Faversham could allow himself to be so easily imposed upon is more than I can understand," she went on, angrily. "He quarrels with his own nearest relations, and will have nothing whatever to say *to them;* and *now*, because some designing person sends him a child in order to get rid of the trouble of it, he actually allows it to remain! However, *I* shall tolerate no children here, and that he will speedily find out!"

She stopped for a few seconds, not for want of *words*, but breath; and during this short pause Mary ventured to offer a timid remonstrance; but, without deigning to listen to what she was saying, the aggrieved woman proceeded, though in a more subdued tone than before, "Of course, if *I* had been here this would never have happened! so there was *some* excuse for Mr. Faversham after all, as he had no one to speak to on the subject except *you*," with an extremely contemptuous emphasis on the pronoun. "But *I'll* soon get him out of the scrape, though," and she pressed her thin lips together, and looked very determined. "I feel greatly in-

clined"—this was added more to herself than Mary—"to wrap the child up and carry it down to my sister's."

"Oh, surely you will let her alone for this night at least?" pleaded the girl in a tearful voice; "it would kill her."

"Pooh! children don't die so easily," was the comforting response.

"Such a dreary night, too!" persisted Mary.

"It's perfectly fine," replied Mrs. Crossley, angrily; "the snow ceased long ago; so I beg you will just do as I bid you, instead of raising objections. When a thing *is* to be done," she continued, rising briskly from her seat, and divesting herself of her shawl, "the sooner one sets about it the better."

Mary began to cry in good earnest now, but was soon silenced by Mrs. Crossley's peremptory order that she should take a candle and accompany her upstairs, which she was of course obliged to do.

There lay the child fast asleep, forming such a pretty picture, that as Mary gazed on her she could not help hoping that her stony-hearted companion might feel her re-

solution waver at the sight of so much beauty and innocence.

"Do look at her now," she said in a tone of earnest entreaty. "Did you ever in your life see a prettier child?"

"Hum!" ejaculated Mrs. Crossley, shortly. "I do not approve of making such a fuss about the child of nobody knows who!"

Poor Mary racked her brains in trying to think of something which might have the effect of turning the current of her thoughts, so as to gain for the child a night's respite.

"Just examine her clothes," she continued, insinuatingly; "it is quite evident that she is no poor person's child."

"So much the worse," returned the housekeeper, bitterly; "she will be all the more difficult to manage."

"Her linen is all marked *Lilian Mertoun*, which shows there is nothing to be ashamed of on the part of the parents."

"Well, all I can say is this," observed Crossley, in a dogged, defiant tone, after she had closely inspected the little garment which Mary handed to her. "I wish *Mrs.* Mertoun—if, indeed, there is such a person

—would keep her children to herself; *we* don't want them!"

And having thus expressed her decided opinion she moved a step nearer to the bed, as if for the purpose of carrying her previously uttered threat into immediate execution.

What could Mary do or say more? She was in despair!

Not quite, though! for it suddenly flashed into her mind that a letter had arrived for Crossley by that evening's post, and knowing the intense gratification which such an event always caused the otherwise impassible housekeeper (perhaps from the fact of its being so rare an occurrence for any one to write), to her she lost no time in producing it from her pocket, fervently wishing that the tidings it brought might prove to be of an unusually interesting and absorbing nature.

Crossley did not, however (as she rather hoped would be the case), leave the apartment on being presented with it, but, seating herself in a chair, she complacently turned the letter over in her hand, carefully examining the handwriting and postmarks; and then—

not possessing very good sight—instituted a search for her spectacles, which having been at length discovered, she tore open the welcome missive and proceeded to make herself mistress of its contents.

After reading about half way down the first page she gave a slight start, uttered an ejaculation of surprise, and commenced again from the beginning, while Mary remained in an uncomfortable state of suspense, anxiously observing her every movement, and wondering much at the trembling eagerness with which she appeared to devour each word of the closely-written epistle.

When she had finished it she removed her spectacles, and furtively wiped her eyes. This done she put them on again, and indulged herself with a second reading; after which she sat for nearly ten minutes wholly engrossed with her own reflections. Then, heaving a sigh—whether of pleasure or pain, Mary could not determine—she folded the precious letter, and returned it to its envelope, followed a similar course with respect to her spectacles, and transferred them both to her pocket; and, finally, she

took up the candle, and walked straight over to the bed.

So far, Mary had not received sufficient enlightenment to enable her to form any correct idea of what was passing in the housekeeper's mind; but her heart sank within her, when she saw her attention once more directed to the still sleeping child; and this feeling of depression was presently increased by Crossley pulling aside the coverlet—doubtless with the determination (so thought the indignant girl) of carrying out the cruel purpose she had designed against the unconscious object of her animosity.

A softly murmured "Poor little lamb!" startled Mary excessively, and an expression of utter bewilderment crept over her good-humoured countenance, as she eyed the hard-featured housekeeper, and asked herself whether such a display of tender emotion could by *any possibility* have emanated from so unpromising an individual.

So absorbed was she in trying to solve this question, that she quite lost sight of all propriety by holding the candlestick, which

Crossley had hastily thrust into her hand, so clumsily, that the snuffers and extinguisher belonging to it fell to the ground; and the candle itself was on the point of following their example, when Crossley snatched it unceremoniously from her, exclaiming in tones very different from those she had just used, "I really think you are one of the most stupid girls I ever saw!"

A slight tinge of colour came to Mary's cheek at this accusation, but she ventured no reply beyond stooping to recover the missing articles, and Crossley continued, sharply, "Who, for instance, but yourself, would have dreamt of putting the child to bed without even taking the trouble to find out whether her feet were warm or cold? I have just been feeling them, and they are positively like ice!"

Mary stammered out some confused excuse, and the sharp voice continued, in accents rather of *command* than advice, "Instead of standing there *staring*, I should *advise* you to hasten to the kitchen and fill a bottle with hot water, and bring it here without delay; unless, indeed," added Mrs.

Crossley, with increased severity, "you wish to see the poor child *quite* frozen!"

"Well! she *is* a queer one!" soliloquised her subordinate, as she hurried off to fulfil her behest. "First of all she abuses the child, and declares she shall go to the workhouse, and now she suddenly veers round and pretends that it is *I* who am cruel, and not herself! To be sure, I *might* have thought of her feet, poor dear!" pursued the kind-hearted girl, almost in a tone of self-reproach. "But then," she went on more briskly, "I could not be expected to do everything; and, considering the circumstances, I flatter myself that I managed matters pretty well!"

CHAPTER VI.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience stands He waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."

It was rather later than usual when Mr. Faversham retired to rest that night.

He ascended the stairs with slow and cautious footsteps, as if afraid of disturbing the slumbers of his young guest.

When he reached the door of her apartment, he paused for a moment in irresolution, which would probably have resulted in his entering it, had he not been deterred by fancying he heard some one approaching him from one of the more distant passages. Quickly moving on, therefore, he withdrew to the privacy of his own room.

What a strange and inexpressible change seemed to have taken place in him within a few short hours! He could scarcely re-

cognise himself: so many new and perplexing thoughts were struggling for the mastery. Some long-crushed-out germ of feeling appeared suddenly to have sprung up within his withered heart. *Something*, he could not have defined *what*, was certainly changed. He felt less wretched. The life of utter loneliness which he had for many years led—never fully realised before—came now with vivid force to his recollection; while a misty vision of future brightness seemed occasionally to flit across his re-awakened imagination.

He had long ago concluded that all life's hope and sunshine was for him departed, and had gone on in darkness and misery ever since. Could he have been mistaken after all? Were there some wells of comfort still remaining (though hitherto undiscovered by him), some capabilities of enjoyment? and if so, in what did they consist?

Thus he continued to muse and wonder, and ask himself question after question, which he was unable to answer.

Like a blind man who has suddenly be-

come alive to the consciousness that he has been traversing the wrong pathway, and gropes about him in helpless distraction, totally ignorant as to the proper course to pursue, so Mr. Faversham found himself involved in obscurity and uncertainty, with several contradictory agencies at work within him, and ideas of the most incongruous nature chasing themselves in rapid succession throughout the chambers of his discomposed mind. All was tumult and confusion—chaos and doubt! Yet even this state of mental perturbation, strange and unsatisfactory though it appears, was surely infinitely better for him than those feelings of morbid self-satisfaction which had hitherto led him to view everything through the distorted medium of his own prejudiced and perverse understanding.

He saw now that he had been wrong; and was not this a step in the right direction? that his life had been a mistake! and though he could not as yet analyse his reflections, or comprehend the why and the wherefore of all that he experienced, he was not the less sensible that some sort of revo-

lution was taking place in his erewhile ossified heart.

His first sensations on awakening the following morning, were those of a pleasurable nature; but ere long he became a prey to that peculiar form of depression which so often follows any season of unusual excitement.

Who indeed has not in his own experience suffered from a similar reaction?

Who has not wondered that the scenes which his vivid fancy conjured up before him in the witching time of night should lose their charm, when surveyed by the sober light of day!

How is it, we ask ourselves, that the lofty aspirations which visited us *then*—enabling us to rise above ourselves, and our own selfish interests — should entirely disappear, leaving us neither wiser nor better than before; that the obstacles which we *then* found ourselves able to overleap, without the slightest difficulty—the noble resolves, and wise purposes, and generous actions, which seemed *then* so easy of accomplishment, should now assume such gigantic

proportions, that we are deterred from even attempting them!

Mr. Faversham felt something like this on the morning in question. What had he done? he inquired, aghast at his own daring in conniving at the child's detention: what trouble, and inconvenience, and responsibility might he not have brought upon himself by allowing her to remain under his roof, although only for the brief period of one night!

Crossley, too—what would *she* think of such an unusual proceeding? It was quite possible that she might show her resentment by throwing up her situation, so tenacious was she in resisting everything which could have the effect of lessening her own importance.

Mr. Faversham regarded her with an equal mixture of admiration and dread.

The *admiration* was probably owing to his having recognised some traits in her decided character which accorded with his own; while the *dread* consisted merely of an undefined apprehension lest the scorpion-like tongue which had so often in-

flicted wounds upon the tenderest susceptibilities of her fellow-servants should at any time be brought to bear upon himself!

In every way, however, Crossley suited him; and the idea of thus losing her was most disagreeable to him. She had fallen into his ways—humoured his whims and eccentricities; offered no opposition to any of his absurd rules or regulations; and, above all, carefully furthered his views in the matter of expenditure.

For the poor old man, in addition to his other failings, had gradually suffered himself to drift into the injurious habit of narrow-heartedness in regard to money matters, as well as everything else.

But, to do him justice, though he felt a growing aversion to spend more than he could possibly avoid, he never cared for money for its own sake—never found any satisfaction in looking into his bankers' account, or exulted in the thought of the many thousands which year by year accumulated in their hands. *No*, it was only another of his peculiarities, a trifling but encroaching weakness, in the in-

dulgence of which he was cordially seconded by Crossley, whose disposition had long inclined her to the same deteriorating influence.

A child's clear, ringing laugh disturbed Mr. Faversham's musings.

He started at the unwonted sound, and a look of intense pain passed over his melancholy features. Some half-obliterated reminiscence of former days flashed suddenly into his enfeebled mind, and he pressed his hand wearily to his brow, as if to force back the tide of thought which came rushing through his brain.

Again the same merry, rippling laugh was heard!

This time it seemed rather to soothe than to excite; for his face grew softer in its expression, as he went slowly on with his dressing, listening intently meanwhile, to hear whether the sound would be repeated.

All was silent, when he at length left his apartment, and stealthily approached the door of his young visitor's room. It was ajar, and no one within save Lily, whom he could see sitting up in her cot, singing a

soft lullaby to her doll. A curious sensation came over him as he gazed upon the scene; and after an instant's hesitation he advanced into the room.

"Oh, ganpa!" exclaimed the child, as soon as she caught sight of him, "come and kiss Lily good morning. You needn't kiss Polly, though," she added, with a grave little shake of the head, "'cause she isn't at all good."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Mr. Faversham, kindly.

"Oh, she's *very* naughty! she *won't* go to s'eep."

Which was scarcely surprising, considering that the mimic baby was so constructed as to remain wide awake until placed in a recumbent position; whereas it was at present sitting bolt upright in Lily's arms.

Mr. Faversham smiled.

He could not understand how it was that the very sound of this stranger-child's voice should exercise such a fascinating influence over him; while the mere sight of her sweet face, and innocent, infantile expression, had the effect of causing all his doubts and dif-

ficulties to vanish like mist before the bright morning sun.

Ere he could make any response to her last observation, however, he was surprised by the sudden entrance of Crossley, who came bustling into the room, carrying a bath in one hand, and a large can of hot water in the other.

On seeing her master, she stopped short, and a faint flush appeared on her parchment coloured cheeks, as she glanced apprehensively into his face. He, in his turn, regarded her in bewildered astonishment; apparently anxious, yet afraid, to advert to the subject which occupied both their thoughts. Each stood in awe of the other, though of the two Mr. Faversham was certainly the most perturbed, not knowing what form Crossley's anger might assume, nor to what length it might carry her. The housekeeper—woman-like—was the first to break the silence.

"I thought the poor child would be perished in this cold room, without a fire," she said, in a half apologetic, half defiant tone, "and so I made Mary light one."

"So I perceive," replied Mr. Faversham, observing it for the first time.

Another embarrassing pause followed, during which Crossley busied herself in getting Lily's bath ready for her.

"It is very good of you to take so much trouble," began Mr. Faversham, clearing his throat, and speaking in a hesitating voice.

"Not at all, sir," replied the housekeeper, briskly; "it's quite a pleasure to do anything for such a sweet child."

Her master stared at her in speechless amazement. He had expected remonstrances, and perhaps threats; but this extraordinary conduct on the part of one who had always professed to detest children, quite staggered him.

"This is a strange affair, Crossley!" he remarked, somewhat uneasily, after he had attentively scanned her countenance. "Do you think there is any chance of our finding out to whom she belongs?" And he pointed significantly to the occupant of the little cot.

"Her linen is all marked like this," replied the housekeeper in a careless tone, showing a tiny pocket-handkerchief with the

same name which Mary had pointed out to herself on the previous night, neatly written in one corner.

"Lilian Mertoun!" repeated Mr. Faversham, in a slow, dreamy voice. "I never heard that name before," he continued, meditatively; "did you?" turning sharply round on Crossley.

"Not until last night," was her decisive reply; "Mary showed it to me after I returned from my sister's."

Mr. Faversham heaved an unconscious sigh.

"Of course it is owing to some mistake that the child is here," he observed, in a tone suggestive of anything but satisfaction at the idea of her being reclaimed by her friends.

Crossley shook her head very emphatically as she replied, in a quick, firm tone, "Excuse me, sir, but I don't believe there is any mistake at all. The trunk was directed as plainly as possible to Faversham Hall, and the very way the child seems to have been smuggled into the house shows that it must have been a pre-arranged plan."

"Do you think so?" questioned Mr. Faversham, with irrepressible eagerness; then checking himself, and speaking more calmly, he continued, "What are we to do with her?"

Crossley marked his ill-disguised anxiety, and a half smile flickered over her face as she answered, in a voice of assumed indifference, "Well, sir, if you see no objection, we might keep her *here* until we find out whether it is the intention of her friends to claim her."

"And in the event of their *not* doing this?" pursued Mr. Faversham, feeling more and more mystified at Crossley's wonderful amiability.

"In that case," she went on, reflectively, "you might, perhaps, be tempted to allow her to remain here altogether."

"But the trouble and inconvenience?" objected Mr. Faversham, fixing his eyes gravely upon her impenetrable countenance.

"That would not be worth speaking of," quickly rejoined Crossley.

Mr. Faversham's eyes once more distended with surprise as he gazed into his house-

keeper's face. A momentary suspicion crossed his mind that she might be talking ironically; but the tone of marked respect which she adopted towards him, together with the unmistakable seriousness of her manner, soon convinced him that she was quite in earnest.

"Look, ganpa!" cried Lily, interrupting him with one of her merry peals of laughter just as he was about to speak, "Polly's got one eye shut now, but she isn't gone to s'eep yet."

On hearing this startling announcement, Crossley hastened over to the bed, and, taking up the doll, which even her inexperienced eye told her must be a very expensive one, she began to examine it with an air of suddenly-developed interest, fully expecting to find that some part of its delicate machinery had been irreparably injured. Seeing nothing amiss with it, however, she turned with a look of relief to Lily, and said, coaxingly, "You had better let me put your Polly into its own little bed, and then *she* will go to sleep while Polly's mamma gets up."

And, suiting the action to the word, she quickly brought forward the doll's bedstead, and placing the mimic baby in it, tucked the pretty pink counterpane snugly around its inanimate form, and after watching it for a moment with an expression of mingled amusement and admiration, she again approached the laughing child, and carried her off in triumph to the bath, which she had prepared for her in front of the blazing fire.

Mr. Faversham, meanwhile, went downstairs with slow and measured footsteps, murmuring to himself, "It's incredible! I really believe the child has bewitched us both!"

In this opinion Mary, the good-natured housemaid, entirely concurred.

She noticed, while waiting on him at breakfast that morning, that a look of disappointment flitted over his face on seeing the table only laid for one, and she privately resolved that before another meal-hour arrived she would venture to give the irascible housekeeper a hint on the subject, even though she might thereby render herself liable to a sharp reprimand for presuming to

offer a suggestion to one so much older and wiser than herself.

To her intense surprise Crossley, instead of accusing her of disrespect or officiousness in interfering in matters which did not concern her, listened to her communication with unusual consideration.

"I really think you are beginning to improve, Mary," she remarked, condescendingly; "I should not have given you credit for so much sense and intelligence!"

After listening to those words of commendation—the very first which Crossley had addressed to her since she had taken service at Faversham—Mary went out of the housekeeper's presence in the most bewildered frame of mind, greatly wondering what she had done more than usual to merit her favourable opinion; and in the plenitude of her gratitude she even began to consider whether, it might not be advisable for her to remain in her present situation until she should see what turn things would take, instead of strictly adhering to the resolution she had previously formed of giving it up without delay.

She was somewhat at a loss to account for the glaring inconsistencies of Crossley's conduct, as well as the extraordinary metamorphosis which Mr. Faversham appeared to have undergone; but, upon reflection, she decided that it might all be traced to the same source, being, in fact, simply attributable to the working of the spell which Lily, in her unconscious innocence, had thrown around them both.

CHAPTER VII.

Only a little child!
  But, oh, so very fair;
With sunny smiles, and soft blue eyes,
  And lovely golden hair.

Only a little child!
  But, oh, so full of glee;
And though I'm old, and stern, and sad,
  She's very fond of me!

H. W.

MR. FAVERSHAM felt surprised, and perhaps a little annoyed, as hour after hour passed away without his hearing or seeing anything of his young guest.

He had hurried over his solitary breakfast, and proceeded from the sombrous dining-room to the smaller and more comfortable library, quite expecting to find her there. But no signs of a child's presence were visible; even the little velvet suit which he had been examining the night before had disappeared, and nothing remained to assure him that the fairy-like visitant had not taken her departure as rapidly and as silently as she arrived.

He was too proud to show the anxiety he really felt, otherwise he would have rang the bell and questioned Mary as to Lily's whereabouts, so after remaining indoors longer than usual in the vain hope of seeing her, he at last grew tired of waiting, and hastily putting on his hat and overcoat, and arming himself with an umbrella in case the heavy-looking clouds should betoken another fall of snow, he went to take his customary walk.

Some two hours later he returned, and was passing quickly on through the hall to his library, when he heard a most extraordinary noise—apparently neither laughing nor crying, but a mixture of both—issuing from the dining-room.

For a moment he seemed puzzled; then assuming a look of determination, he advanced unhesitatingly to the massive oaken door, opened it, and entered the room.

Such a curious scene met his astonished eyes.

The vast apartment which he had left in the early morning cold, dusty, and comfortless, appeared to have undergone a complete

transformation. Its size was reduced fully one-half by the closing of the tapestried folding-doors, while the freshly-polished grate, which had for years been denied the power of dispensing even the tiniest spark of warmth or cheerfulness, was now filled with glowing coals, imparting an air of home-like comfort to the hitherto dreary looking room.

Lily was seated on a low chair near the fire wholly engrossed with her doll, who seemed to be indulging in the very natural infantile occupation of *crying*, and the noise occasioned by this somewhat unusual ebullition on the part of the generally well-behaved Polly, was greatly increased by the excitable housemaid, who testified her admiration at such an unanswerable proof of the doll's cleverness by a hearty and prolonged fit of laughter.

Her merriment came to an untimely end, however, when she found herself confronted by her master, and (as if this was not of itself sufficiently discouraging) saw to her dismay that Crossley was closely following in his wake.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly

conduct, Mary?" sternly demanded the housekeeper, who really had some excuse for feeling annoyed, as, knowing Mr. Faversham's singularities, and being moreover doubtful whether the changes she had thus surreptitiously made would receive his sanction, she intended to have chosen her own time and place for entering upon the subject; and this abrupt and inopportune discovery might, for anything she knew to the contrary, have the effect of considerably damaging her carefully-arranged plans.

Mary was too much abashed to offer any excuses; she only turned away, and began with a very red face to lay the cloth for dinner; but Lily, who was happily unconscious of there being anything amiss, exclaimed in a tone of great simplicity, "She was just laughing at my Polly; she says she never saw a doll kie before! isn't that funny, ganpa?" And the soft blue eyes looked at him with an expression of extreme amusement.

"I thought your Polly was too good to cry," answered Mr. Faversham, mechanically seating himself in a capacious arm-

chair, which the watchful Crossley had promptly wheeled over to the fire.

"Oh, she doesn't *always* kie," replied the child quickly, "only sometimes! and then when I pat her like this she stops d'rectly, but she gen'ally begins again when I leave off."

"She appears to be a most accomplished specimen of her kind!" observed Mr. Faversham, relapsing for a moment into the cold sarcastic tone which had become so familiar to him.

"Lily doesn't exactly know what 'complished spec'men means," answered his visitor, with a grave wondering look in her innocent eyes.

"No, of course not," he said, feeling reproved, and yet quite unable to repress a smile at the unconscious dignity of her manner as she lisped out the words. "I only meant to say that it is not every doll who has the *power* of crying."

"Polly can walk too!" cried Lily with one of those sunny glances, which found their way straight into the old man's heart.

"Walk!" repeated he, incredulously, "surely that is too much to expect."

"Come here, C'ossey, and show ganpa how nice she looks when she's walking," continued the child, turning imperiously towards the housekeeper, and holding out the doll; "and Lily will be kite good, and shut her eyes tight."

Before Mr. Faversham could recover from his amazement at hearing the usually exacting Crossley addressed in this peremptory tone, she had come smilingly forward, and, taking two curiously-shaped keys from her pocket, proceeded to obey the little lady's demand.

She had spent nearly an hour that morning, in endeavouring to make herself mistress of the contents of the book of instructions which she found inside the doll's travelling trunk, and was not a little proud of her success.

"It's really a wonderful invention, sir," she explained in a low voice to Mr. Faversham, "and so simple; you have only to wind it up like a clock, and it will cry, or walk, or even make a noise which resembles

talking. But as I found out from Miss Lily," —this was added in a respectfully-confidential tone—"that she has not the least idea *how* it is managed, having been always accustomed to shut her eyes whenever any one wound it up for her, I thought it would be better to pursue the same plan, as she might soon grow tired of it if she found the mystery so easily explained."

"Lily's got her eyes fast shut," suddenly exclaimed the child, getting impatient at this unnecessary delay. "Isn't Polly ready *yet?*"

"Wait a moment, dear," returned Crossley, going hurriedly on with her task; "*now* she is all right;" and setting the mechanical baby upon the ground, it certainly did contrive, by a series of spasmodic steps, to cross to the other side of the room; Lily meantime looking on with infinite delight, and clapping her small hands gleefully together, while Crossley's matter-of-fact face wore a look of undisguised admiration, and even the impassible Mr. Faversham appeared to derive a certain amount of satisfaction in watching the progress of such a novel and ingeniously-constructed figure.

"I think Polly must be tired now," suggested Crossley after it had more than once repeated the performance, and she saw that its walking powers had been sufficiently tested for the present. Whereupon Lily, quick to take alarm at the idea of her favourite being subjected to any needless fatigue, instantly caught it up in her arms and began to arrange a comfortable nest for it in one corner of the sofa.

While she was thus engaged Mr. Faversham took the opportunity of casting a critical glance around him.

He by no means *approved* of the unauthorised alterations which Crossley had effected during his temporary absence from the house; and although he felt at that moment strangely disinclined to find fault with her, yet he considered it incumbent on him to say at least something which would show her that it was not altogether a matter of indifference to him.

Accordingly he spoke at length in a tone which betokened neither displeasure nor satisfaction.

"I see you have been making some

changes here," were the words he used, but the look that accompanied them was dubious and somewhat perplexed.

"Yes, sir," replied Crossley, who probably understood his feelings quite as well, and perhaps better than he did himself; "I fancied you would not object to my letting Miss Lily come into the room?"

"Certainly not," he answered quickly; "but——"

"The fact is, she has been talking about you all the morning, sir," continued the artful woman, without waiting for him to proceed with his explanation; "and I feared it would distress her greatly if she were not allowed to dine with you, so I had the folding doors closed, and a fire lighted, *otherwise*——"

"Ah, well! I dare say it was a good plan," said Mr. Faversham, interrupting in his turn, as he perceived that the tall chair which Lily had occupied on the preceding night was now standing close beside his own at the dinner-table (having been judiciously placed there by Mary, while he was thinking of something else), "I dare say it was a

good plan," he repeated, almost energetically, "for the weather is certainly exceptionally cold just now."

"It is, sir," eagerly assented Crossley; "and she is such a delicate-looking little thing," pointing to Lily, "that it would be very unsafe for her to remain in a room without a fire."

"Hum! I suppose so," mused Mr. Faversham; "still there is the library, you know."

To this observation Crossley turned a deaf ear.

She appeared all at once to be interested in counting the exact number of bows which ornamented the front of Lily's white muslin pinafore, and when she had satisfied herself on this point she hurried over to the table, for the purpose of ascertaining whether every article was in its proper position, after which she lifted the expectant child to its elevated seat, and then went to scold Mary for not having yet taken in the soup.

Until the meal was ended, Crossley might have been seen hovering near the dining-room door, from whence she could exercise

a strict surveillance over the movements of those within, and be at hand to interfere in case Mr. Faversham should omit to attend to the wants of his young guest.

She need not have troubled herself on that account, for he seemed to be entirely engrossed in seeing Lily provided with everything that was necessary, and even sent away his own plate of soup untasted when he found that she did not relish hers.

After carefully selecting the food which he fancied she would prefer, and imperatively waving off Mary, who came forward to proffer her assistance, the old man took upon himself the office of preparing the child's dinner, by cutting it into very small pieces.

This done, he placed it before her, and at the same time handed her a spoon in lieu of the knife and fork which he had taken the precaution of removing out of her reach.

But it was quite evident that, whatever Mr. Faversham's own opinion on the subject may have been, Lily was far from satisfied with this arrangement. Her rosy lips

formed themselves into a curious little pout, and she glanced disdainfully at the spoon, without attempting to use it.

"What is the matter?" anxiously inquired Mr. Faversham; "will you not eat your dinner, my dear?"

"Lily doesn't like a '*poon*," she said, in a troubled voice; "Lily wants her knife and fork."

"Of course she does," cried Mr. Faversham, turning sharply to Mary; "you had better get her one at once. No, not that," he continued, hastily, seeing that she was about to produce the very same which he had himself laid aside; "it would be most dangerous for her to use a knife like that; go and ask Crossley for another. Surely there must be a child's dinner-service in the house."

"Mercy me!" ejaculated the housekeeper, who heard this speech through the open door. "To think of his asking for *that!*—well, *I* would not have been the person to propose such a thing, that's all I can say."

And passing rapidly through an adjoining

room, she unlocked an old-fashioned plate-chest, and taking out the before-mentioned dinner-service (which consisted of a massive silver salver, containing a richly chased plate, knife, fork, spoon, and cup), carried it to the dining-room, and, without a word, placed it on the table.

Did no thrill of emotion pass through the old man's frame as he beheld this fresh memento of other and happier days? Apparently not, for his countenance underwent no change, except that the thin lips were pressed more firmly together, and a close observer might have noticed that his hand trembled as he took up the knife and fork and gave them to Lily.

"Tank you, ganpa," said the child, delightedly; and she appropriated the whole service so naturally that Mary could not refrain from afterwards expressing her admiration to Crossley.

"It is quite easy to see that she has been accustomed to these kind of things," she observed, in a triumphant tone. "Did I not say from the very first that she was a little lady?"

"Who ever doubted it?" demanded Crossley, with a grim smile.

Mary was ready with a retort; but, remembering her place, she wisely checked herself, and said nothing.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause
(So have we all) of joy;
Then wisely, good sir, weigh
Your sorrow with your comfort."

NOTWITHSTANDING his self-assurances to the contrary, it is quite certain that Mr. Faversham was for a time rendered very uneasy by the reflection that Lily's friends might at any moment come forward, and oblige him to relinquish her into their own keeping.

But, as week after week passed away without his fears being realised, he began to feel a greater sense of security; and even to indulge a hope that he might really be allowed to retain possession of the child altogether.

For, in spite of the pains which he took to disguise the fact both from himself and others, it soon became patent to all, that Lily grew every day dearer and dearer to

the old man's heart. Her childish prattle charmed him more than the sweetest music, and her little winning ways, and fresh guileless simplicity, proved irresistible in dissipating the gloom which had so long hung over him, and lifting the depressing load of anguish from his overburdened spirit.

Gradually, too, a brighter and purer atmosphere seemed to pervade the dreary-looking mansion; and though all partook of its genial influences, none perhaps derived more benefit from the change than Mr. Faversham.

One by one the heavily-fastened shutters were removed from the large bow-windows; the close venetian blinds drawn up, and the cheerful sunshine permitted to find its way into the erewhile darkened and deserted apartments.

Lily had the happy art of making herself at home anywhere and everywhere. Never was such a fascinating little fairy seen at Faversham. No spot was free from her light tread—no corner too remote for her to explore! She flitted hither and thither,

gay as a lark, and as fond of variety as any butterfly. One moment she would be gleefully scampering along the slippery oak-floored passages in full pursuit of Crossley's ill-favoured cat, or awakening the echoes of some unoccupied chamber in the most out-of-the-way part of the house; the next, she might have been found in the library, sitting upon Mr. Faversham's knee, quietly listening to his conversation, or perhaps consulting him with an air of the utmost gravity as to what particular costume she should select from her Polly's extensive wardrobe to replace the fashionably-made one in which the doll was at that instant arrayed, but which Lily would suddenly pronounce old and ugly.

And, although Mr. Faversham could not be expected to evince any great interest in such a trifling affair, he never checked her by word or deed. Only sometimes, while she was talking to him in her quaint confiding way, a curious expression, half tender, half bitter, would flit over his face—the tenderness being for her, the bitterness all for himself; that he should have lived so long, and yet known so

little of those kindly emotions for which she evidently gave him credit; and that the simple truths which even to her baby mind seemed real and convincing should be dim and obscure to his more complex understanding.

The secret of Lily's influence, probably, lay in her being so totally unconscious of it. Her word soon became law, but *she* never seemed to be aware of the fact!—never took the smallest advantage of the indulgence shown her, or evinced any symptom of being spoiled by all the praise and admiration which were so freely lavished upon her.

It was *natural* for her to ask for what she wanted, and give utterance to her own childish thoughts, and feelings, and opinions; *therefore* she did it. It was also natural for her to be petted and made much of, so that she accepted Mr. Faversham's attentions and the servants' caresses quite as a matter of course, without for a moment supposing that it could possibly be a subject of surprise to any one.

But although Lily was, as a rule, the merriest little creature imaginable, full of life

and enjoyment, seeing beauty and brightness in everything, bestowing sunshine and smiles wherever she went, there were times when she sadly pined for her mother; and on those occasions it required all Crossley's powers of persuasion, as well as a vast amount of coaxing on the part of Mary, to reconcile her to the separation.

For a while Mr. Faversham was kept in ignorance of this touching proof of the child's affectionate disposition; but one night he happened to be passing Lily's room about an hour after she had retired to rest, and, hearing a muffled sound as of some one in distress, he opened the door, and went in.

He found the poor child alone, sitting up in her bed, with her face hidden in her hands—crying bitterly.

It was some time before he could discover the nature of her grief, so incoherent were the replies she gave to his anxious inquiries; but she managed at length to make him understand that she had been dreaming of her mamma!

"And then I just woke up," she explained, with a fresh burst of tears, "and thought I

should see her; but she isn't here at all, and Lily does want her so!"

A long, weary sigh wound up the sentence; and Mr. Faversham, who scarcely knew how to comfort her under such an unexpected calamity, put his hand softly upon her bowed head, and tried by a few gentle, soothing words, to induce her to forget her disappointment.

When he saw that every attempt he made to turn her thoughts into another channel was ineffectual, he took up a large, warm shawl which lay on a chair beside the bed, and, wrapping it closely around her, carried her down to the library, hoping he might in this way be more successful in creating a diversion in the poor child's mind.

For a considerable time, however, he appeared to make no progress; for though Lily clung to him as fondly as ever, and seemed to derive a certain degree of comfort from his kindness and sympathy, yet every now and then the tears would begin afresh, and the piteous wailing cry burst from the little loving heart—"Oh, ganpa! Lily does so want to see her own mamma."

By-and-by a bright thought flashed across Mr. Faversham's brain. He remembered the strange question which Lily had with such startling abruptness put to him when she first made her appearance in that very room; and being by this time, thanks to her own ingenuousness, sufficiently conversant with her character to know the kind of argument which would be most likely to influence her, he resolved on reminding her of what had then occurred.

"Don't you think it would vex your mamma if she knew you were crying?" he asked, in rather a grave voice.

"Why doesn't she come to me?" moaned the child; "she said she would, and she hasn't!"

"*Did* she say she would come?" inquired Mr. Faversham, with a sudden start, and contraction of his brows.

"Yes," replied Lily, in a tone of sorrowful reproach; "she told me to be good, and then she p'omised she would take Lily home again some day."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Faversham, forcing himself to speak cheerfully, though

there was an expression of keen distress still lingering upon his countenance; "if she promised, you may be sure she will do so, at the proper time."

"When will the p'oper time come?" demanded Lily, with quivering lips.

"I cannot tell," replied Mr. Faversham, looking tenderly down upon her; "but surely," he added, in an eager, anxious tone, "my little Lily is very happy here."

"Yes," she answered, somewhat falteringly, as she lifted her tearful eyes with wistful earnestness to his face; "only——"

She paused; and Mr. Faversham, who could readily comprehend all that she meant by that one suggestive word, said, hurriedly,

"Do you remember what your mamma said to you when she brought you here?"

For a moment no reply came to this question; then a suppressed, half-choking voice answered—"Yes, Lily 'members that."

"And what was it, dear?" continued Mr. Faversham, very gently.

"She just kissed me and told me to be a good Lily, and stay and comfort you!"

After this there was an interval of silence,

which neither of them seemed disposed to break; until at length, just as Mr. Faversham was beginning to ask himself whether Lily's perfect stillness might not betoken *sleep*, rather than thought, she startled him by exclaiming with sudden energy—

"Ganpa!"

"What is it, my dear?" he asked, stooping to examine her flushed face.

"Lily will be good, and stay here, and not kie for mamma."

"That's right," rejoined Mr. Faversham, feeling greatly relieved.

"And, then, p'raps she *will* come by-and-by," pursued the child, a bright smile passing over the rosebud lips as she spoke.

Ah! she little knew the pang which these simple words would inflict upon the old man's heart. What a melancholy picture of loneliness and desolation they would conjure up before him! How doubly insupportable life would from henceforth be to him if unblessed by her sweet presence! How full of gloom and wretchedness—gloom so much denser, and wretchedness more complete by far, than that from which she had unwittingly rescued

him, *because* his seared heart and deadened affections rendered him at that time utterly callous; whereas now the case was altered! His long-slumbering energies had re-awakened; the capacity of loving revived within him; and, the kindly traits of his character being once more brought into play, he had a sort of feeling, amounting almost to a conviction, that he could never again, under any circumstances, relapse into his former state of insensibility.

But he said nothing of all this to Lily—only drew her closer to him, and tenderly stroked the fair head, with its ruffled curls of gold; and inwardly resolved that, if *he* could prevent it, she should not be permitted to sustain any real injury by being separated from the mother whom she appeared to regard with such clinging devotion.

"*Do* I comfort you, ganpa?" asked the child, presently, in a tone that showed that she was herself doubtful as to whether she had not neglected to carry out her mamma's instructions on the subject.

She raised her troubled eyes to Mr. Faversham's as she put the question; and their ear-

nest, appealing expression must have proved irresistible, for he answered impetuously, "Indeed you do, my darling! You are my greatest earthly comfort!"

Lily pondered on these words for a minute or two; then she remarked, in her wondering, innocent fashion, "Is Lily all you have got to love?"

"Yes, *all!*" he replied in a tone of suppressed feeling; "before you came I was alone—always alone!"

"And were you always mis'able?" said Lily, whose thoughts had once more returned to the charge she had received from her mamma.

Mr. Faversham made no audible response to this inquiry; but he pressed his lips fondly upon the little upturned forehead, and Lily smoothed his pale, thin cheek with her dimpled hand, murmuring softly to herself,—

"Poor ganpa!"

And he was content to accept her pity, for he knew that something far more precious was mingled with it, and perhaps the very knowledge he had that evening acquired of

the depth and intensity of her affection for her absent parent made him value and appreciate her love for himself even more than usual. He would scarcely have believed it possible for so young a child to retain any vivid recollection of friends from whom she had so long been separated; and, dear as Lily had previously been to him, he felt as if a fresh tie were formed between them since he had witnessed her distress.

While Lily and Mr. Faversham were thus mutually consoling each other, Mary (now promoted to the dignity of Lily's nurse) came hurriedly into the room in search of her young charge. Having left her comfortably sleeping, she was not a little surprised, on returning to look at her about an hour afterwards, that the bed was empty.

Mr. Faversham would not, however, resign her into Mary's keeping, until he had insisted that the latter, who usually occupied a small room adjoining Lily's, should, for that night at least, make up a couch for herself within sight of the child's bed, so that she would be at hand to watch over

her, in case her slumbers should be again disturbed.

The next morning saw Lily as bright and happy as ever; but from that day forward her conduct towards Mr. Faversham was characterised by even more dutifulness and affection than before.

She seemed to look upon him as one whom it was her especial privilege to cheer and comfort; and it was sometimes most amusing to mark the various measures she adopted to accomplish this desirable purpose.

Often she would deny herself of a game of play or turn resolutely away from the temptation of listening to one of Mary's fascinating fairy-tales, because she fancied that Mr. Faversham might feel lonely without her; and a deep and pitiful tenderness shone out of her soft blue eyes whenever she approached him; for was not she the only one he had to love, and must she not therefore be very kind and attentive to him, and try by every means in her small power to make him happy?

CHAPTER IX.

"Every day,
A little life, a blank to be inscribed
With gentle deeds, such as in after time
Console, rejoice, whene'er you turn the leaf
To read them."

Owing to the winter having been an unusually severe one, Lily was for a considerable time entirely confined to the house; but, as the spring advanced, the weather suddenly cleared, and she was permitted to take an occasional run on the terrace just in front of the sitting-room windows.

One pleasant morning, however, Mr. Faversham, seeing how wistfully she looked at him as he was putting on his hat in the hall preparatory to going out for his own regular walk, inquired whether she would like to accompany him; and the intense delight with which she responded to his invitation, and danced off to impart the good news to Mary, and ask her to get her

ready as soon as possible, so pleased and gratified the old man that he afterwards made a point of taking her for a short walk every fine day.

The first time they went through the village street together, Mr. Faversham could not fail to observe that Lily was an object of the greatest interest to all with whom they came in contact. The news of her mysterious appearance at the Hall had, of course, rapidly spread from house to house, with sundry embellishments and exaggerations, and created quite a sensation among these simple people, who had been ever since on the *qui vive*, ready to catch any floating information concerning her, and now gladly hailed the opportunity of beholding one of whom they had heard so much and seen so little.

If Lily had really fallen from the clouds at their very feet they could scarcely have evinced more awe and admiration at her presence. They considered her in the light of some rare curiosity—something to be wondered over and amazed at, rather than fully comprehended; and, while the women

flocked to the doors of their houses to watch the strangely-assorted pair pass, the very children who clung to their skirts seemed quite as eager as themselves to obtain a glimpse of the bright little figure which tripped so gaily along by the side of the stern-looking old man, who had been wont to inspire them with such terror and dislike.

"Well, she *is* a little beauty!" ejaculated a kindly-featured woman, as her eyes rested for a moment upon the fair young face. "Did you ever see such a lovely child?" she whispered with bated breath to a neighbour who stood near her.

"She's well enough in that respect," rejoined the person addressed, in a tone of covert depreciation.

"Isn't it strange where she can have come from?" pursued the first speaker.

"Very," replied her companion, shaking her head with an air of mystery; "it's altogether a most suspicious affair; I only hope no ill may come of it."

"Ill!" repeated the other, with something like indignation in her tone; "nay, neighbour Sharpe, *good* has come of it already.

Look at the Squire! he's altogether a different man, I hear, from what he was!"

"Well, I wish it may last," was Mrs. Sharpe's discouraging response; "only, you see, one never knows what will happen; and I must confess I don't place much dependence upon such sudden changes."

And, emphasising her words by another vigorous shake of the head, she departed to join a group of more congenial spirits, who would, she had reason to believe, listen to her dismal forebodings with a greater degree of interest.

"It is a thousand pities that she should always take such a gloomy view of things," murmured her late companion, as she gazed thoughtfully after her; "and yet it isn't to be wondered at, poor woman! What can *she* know about children? *Her* life has never been cheered and gladdened by their little, innocent ways; and now she cannot bring herself to believe that the simple influence of a child *could* possibly have any effect in softening the old man's disposition. *I* can well understand it, however," she continued, pressing her own infant closer to her

maternal bosom, while she stooped to lend a hand to a little three-year-old maiden, and led her indoors, whither they were presently followed by two other bright, happy-looking children, who were evidently the joy and pride of her heart.

Yes, she *could* understand it, for she had in her own experience, during many seasons of darkness and distress, owed much to the unconscious influence of these God-given ministers of peace and consolation; and, so far from feeling the least astonishment at the reports she had heard concerning the Squire's growing interest in his young charge, she would have considered it strange indeed had he been proof against the attractions of so lovable and beguiling a child as Lily.

Mr. Faversham, meanwhile, had walked straight through the village street, with head erect and a half smile upon his lips; too happy in the society of his little companion to resent the inquisitive looks so freely bestowed upon them both. When they had got quite clear of the houses, he slackened his pace, lest the small, willing

feet should be tired; and after a while he took her in his arms and carried her a considerable distance, turning aside at length into a narrow footpath, which brought them by another and somewhat more circuitous route to the principal entrance of his own place.

"Oh, what a funny little house!" cried the child, pointing to the dilapidated lodge, as Mr. Faversham set her down for the purpose of opening the creaking iron gate; "may Lily just yun in, and see if any one lives there?"

And, without waiting for the desired permission, she darted through the gateway, and across the broad avenue, and was in the very act of attempting to effect an entrance into the ruinous abode by inserting her slight figure through a large opening in one of the panels of the fast-decaying door, when Peggy Morison came forward and threw it open for her.

On seeing who her visitor was, the old woman started, and gazed at her with an air of excessive perturbation; *then* a sudden light seemed to break over her bewildered

mind, and she hobbled back to her seat, nodding her head, and muttering something which Lily could not understand about being "never more surprised in her life," &c.

"Do you live in dis house?" demanded the child, after casting an inquiring glance around her.

"Yes, my little lady, I do," answered old Peggy, in a tone of surprise.

"Why do you walk like that?" asked Lily, again surveying her with an air of great perplexity.

"Bless you, my dear, I can't help it," replied the other, a melancholy smile coming to her withered lips as she spoke; "I wish I could."

"Why can't you help it?" pursued Lily, looking very much puzzled.

"Oh, it's the rheumatiz that has got a hold of me!" groaned the unfortunate woman.

"The *yewmatiz!*" repeated her young visitor, slowly emphasising the word; "what is that?" And she peered apprehensively into the darkest corner of the comfortless room, as if half afraid that some formidable

being might be lurking there, ready to spring forth to seize its prey.

"It's just a complaint," explained Peggy, who noticed the expression of her face, "which comes and seizes upon my limbs."

"Can't you ever yun about like me?" asked Lily, in a tone of sympathy.

"Run about!" echoed the old woman, lifting both her hands in unfeigned amazement; "why, sometimes I cannot walk at all!"

"Poor woman," murmured the child, going up to Peggy's chair, and gazing pityingly into her small, wizened face; "Lily's so sorry!"

"You see it's the damp that does it," observed her afflicted companion, dropping her voice to a confidential undertone.

"Is it?" rejoined Lily, who was evidently at a loss to understand her meaning; "where does the damp come from?"

"Oh, it's everywhere, my dear; the house is full of it."

Lily's eyes opened wider and wider at this assertion; and the communicative woman, pleased and gratified beyond

measure at having secured so attentive a listener to her grievances, went on in a much-injured tone—"Only look at that, now," pointing with her bony forefinger to the broken and discoloured ceiling; "when it rains outside I always know it, because it rains inside too."

Just as she had concluded her sentence, and Lily was pondering over it in her own little mind, and wondering whether Peggy ever thought of using an umbrella to keep off some of the superfluous damp on these rainy occasions, Mr. Faversham, who had grown slightly impatient at the length of her absence, came to remind her that it was time for them to go home.

At the sound of his voice Peggy uttered a half-suppressed ejaculation of dismay, and, rising from her chair, she limped towards him in great trepidation.

Not knowing how long he had been standing at her door, she was, of course, unable to say whether he might not have overheard the whole of her brief colloquy with Lily: in which case, he might, for all that she knew to the contrary, punish her for daring

to attribute any of her own ailments to the leaky roof of the tenement in which he so grudgingly permitted her to reside, by summarily ordering her to leave it; and she felt at that instant, more strongly than she had ever done before, that *a home*, be it ever so wretched and comfortless, is yet better than none at all!

"I hope I see you well, sir," she said, addressing him in an unusually deferential tone, though she looked excessively confused and embarrassed. "It was very kind of the little miss to look in upon me," she continued, deprecatingly; "but, if I had known *you* were waiting for her, I would not have taken the liberty of keeping her."

To all this Mr. Faversham answered not a word—it is doubtful whether he heard her—but he gave one hasty, searching glance around him, and then held out his hand to Lily, saying kindly—

"Come, my dear; we must be going."

"Good-bye!" exclaimed the child, turning with innate politeness to her humble hostess; "Lily will come again very soon."

"Thank you, miss," replied Peggy, in a half-frightened voice.

"And p'raps I'll bring my Polly," said Lily, with the air of one conferring a great favour, "and let her stay with you for a few days. She will 'muse you—won't she, ganpa?" appealing to the grave man at her side with the same confidence as though he had been a little child like herself; while Peggy stood in fear and trembling, every moment expecting to receive the much-dreaded vials of Mr. Faversham's indignation.

To her relief, however, he made no comment; but if she had ventured to look at him she would have observed a curious smile passing over his stern countenance at the idea of her being expected to derive so much benefit from the companionship of Lily's doll.

CHAPTER X.

"Those joyous thoughts that rise and spring
From out the buoyant mind,
Like summer bees upon the wing
Or echoes in the wind."

R. MONTGOMERY.

As for Lily, she returned to the Hall in the happiest frame of mind imaginable, at having, as she supposed, thought on a plan by which the afflicted woman's hours of loneliness might from henceforth be rendered far more endurable than they had hitherto been; and even when Crossley confidently assured her that her kindness would be entirely thrown away upon such a notoriously discontented person, and Mary more charitably, but quite as decidedly, suggested that Peggy was much too old to care for dolls, Lily indignantly repelled both charges, being fully convinced in her own mind that it would be simply *impossible* for *any one*—young or old, discontented or other-

wise—to be guilty of such bad taste as to remain insensible to the fascinations of her much valued "Polly."

Accordingly the day following she sallied forth on her self-imposed mission, attended by Mary; Mr. Faversham offering no objections, albeit he considered it a most unnecessary piece of civility, and would have protested against it but for the fear of vexing Lily, who was never better pleased than when she had an opportunity of performing some little act of self-denial for the sake of others.

And, however trifling and unimportant her present conduct may seem to some of us, as far as *she* was concerned it well deserved the name of self-denial; for her doll was her constant companion, and it would be no small trial for her to be deprived of its society for even the few days that she intended Peggy to keep it.

The old woman was standing at her door as they approached her, feebly attempting to fold up what looked like an old ragged duster, but which Mary afterwards discovered to be the remnant of her last re-

maining table-cloth. She had had a bad night, she said, and was unable to rise until late; consequently, she was only just putting away her breakfast-things, which accounted for the state of confusion in which everything appeared inside the cottage; but she expressed herself as being delighted to see Lily again, and after a good deal of rummaging about amongst sundry articles of unused furniture which were piled up in a small closet at one end of the room she succeeded in bringing to light an old-fashioned low chair, *minus* its back and one arm (though these defects were more than counterbalanced in the eyes of its partial owner by the glory of a dingy drab velvet cushion, that had *once* been bright scarlet), in which she ensconced her guest with an air of extreme satisfaction at having found something worthy for her to occupy.

While this important ceremony was being enacted Mary had time to look around her, and form her own conclusions as to the old woman's condition. She had never been inside the lodge before; for partly owing to the indifferent character she had received

of Peggy from Crossley (who unhesitatingly stigmatised her as the most peevish and ill-natured woman she had ever met with), and partly also from the fact of her having been by no means favourably impressed by the little she had herself seen of her, she insensibly fell into the habit of avoiding her, as one whom it was desirable to keep at a distance.

Great had been her astonishment, therefore, when she heard of Lily's visit of the preceding day, and marked the effect it had produced upon the young child's mind; but one glance at the poverty-stricken abode served to remove her prejudices; and her heart expanded with a sudden feeling of pity for the unfortunate creature, who was compelled to inhabit so wretched a place.

"*Now* I hope you're comfortable, my dear?" remarked Peggy, complacently surveying her small guest.

"Oh, yes," she answered, eagerly, while Mary opened the doll's travelling-trunk, which Lily had insisted on bringing, and taking out the sleeping baby handed it to its rightful owner.

"Here she is!" exclaimed Lily, turning with a smile to the old woman; "I p'omised you I would bring her."

"Bless my heart!" ejaculated Peggy—and there was something like a smile of contempt upon her sunken face as she spoke,—"is *that* what you meant by your Polly?"

"I 'sure you," said Lily, anxiously, "she's *very* 'musing! Please don't be disappointed. She does so many funny things. Just make her kie, Mary," she added, in an excited whisper to her attendant, "and then I'm certain she will like her."

"Well, to be sure!" said Peggy, looking exceedingly puzzled as the first wailing sound broke upon her ear, "did any one ever hear the like of that!" and from the respectful glances she cast at the doll, it seemed as if her contempt had already given way to admiration.

"Lily *knew* you would like it," cried the child, clapping her tiny hands together in irrepressible glee; "now, as soon as she has done kying, she shall walk."

"Goodness me! can she walk too?" in-

quired Peggy, in a tone of such unmistakable interest, that Mary began to wonder whether Lily had not been right after all, in supposing that it would be a source of amusement to her; "well, she *is* a wonderful creature."

But although the old woman's interest and admiration seemed to increase every moment, she resolutely refused to allow the doll to remain with her, even for the brief period of one night.

"No, no, my lamb," she said, shaking her head very decidedly, and looking at Lily with an expression that was absolutely eloquent: "I wouldn't do it for the world!"

"But why not?" urged the child.

"I should be afeard."

"*Feard?*" echoed Lily in bewilderment.

"Something might happen to it, you know; and then old Peggy would never forgive herself."

After a little further discussion the matter was arranged by a sort of compromise; which, if not wholly to Lily's satisfaction, was at any rate greatly to the relief of her humble companion, who had no wish what-

ever to incur the responsibility of taking charge of an article of so much value—indeed, if truth were told, she felt half afraid of the elegantly-dressed figure which could do so many clever things, and looked withal so real and life-like, that she could scarcely persuade herself that it was entirely devoid of sense or intelligence.

"Did you 'spect me to come and see you to-day?" asked Lily, while Mary was busily engaged in re-packing the doll's wardrobe.

"No, that I didn't!" returned Peggy in a tone of energy; "I never expected to see your bonny face again. I thought I had mortally offended the Squire by speaking to the young lady about the damp," she exclaimed in an audible aside to Mary, "but I was so struck with surprise at seeing the little dear come in, that I did not trouble my head to inquire where she came from, and had no idea that *he* was outside the door—perhaps listening to every word we were saying."

"The house does seem to be in a very bad state of repair," observed Mary, in a

voice of concern; "why don't you ask the Squire to get it put in order for you?"

"Me ask him that!" cried Peggy, aghast at the mere mention of such an absurdity; "why, it's with the greatest difficulty I can persuade him to let me live in it at all; though my husband and children died here, and the Squire's father promised that whatever happened I should never be turned out; but *he*" (meaning Mr. Faversham) "would be only too glad of an opportunity of sending me adrift in my old age."

"Dear me! I didn't know it was so bad as that!" said the sympathising girl; "and I suppose your allowance, too, is very small?"

"Barely enough to keep body and soul together," was the melancholy response.

"Haven't you 'nough to eat?" suddenly demanded Lily, whose presence they seemed for the moment to have forgotten.

"Well, my dear, I manage to live, you see," replied the old woman, in a more cheerful tone.

"Do you get p'enty of b'ead and butter,

and meat and pudding, every day, like Lily does?"

"Meat and pudding!" repeated the other, with a spasmodic attempt at a laugh; "poor people must learn to do without those things, my dear."

"Do without them?" said Lily, opening her soft eyes in profound surprise.

"Yes; if they can get *bread*, it's sometimes as much as they can manage, to say nothing of the butter," returned Peggy, moodily.

"Never mind," cried Lily, starting briskly up, after a moment's pause, during which she had evidently been pondering deeply; "you shall have some of *my* meat and pudding every day."

As she said this she gazed into Peggy's face with such a pretty, bewitching smile, that the old woman was much moved, and it was in a tone of real feeling that she answered, "Bless you, my dear, I couldn't take it."

Lily's face clouded; but in a few seconds the brightness returned to it, and she rushed over to Mary, and began to talk to her in a

mysterious undertone. The latter appeared to remonstrate; but the child's earnestness overcame her at length, and she very reluctantly put her hand into her pocket and drew forth a little blue velvet purse, which Lily laughingly snatched from her, and opening it took out half a sovereign (all that it contained), and triumphantly handed it to Peggy, saying, artlessly—"It's all my own! ganpa gave it to me yesterday 'cause Polly lost one of her hats."

"And what do you wish me to do with it?" queried Peggy, assuming a bewildered air as she turned the coin over in her hand.

"Buy some meat and pudding!" was Lily's concise rejoinder. But Peggy resisted this proposal as firmly as she had done the first. It was in vain Lily protested that her doll had several other hats, and did not therefore require a new one; in vain she eagerly assured her that Mr. Faversham fully intended her to spend the money as she pleased—her arguments and entreaties were of no avail in inducing the poor woman to appropriate any part of it to her own use.

So at last Lily was fain to take it back again; but there was a very unwilling look upon her fair young face as she did it, and her lip quivered with vexation, until all at once it occurred to her to try another expedient.

"I'll just yun and tell my ganpa 'bout it," she exclaimed, excitedly; "and then you'll be '*bliged* to have it!"

And before Peggy could utter a syllable in reply, she had started off in the direction of the Hall.

"Well, I never!" soliloquised the old woman, as Mary hurried out of the house in pursuit of her young charge; "I wonder what's going to happen *now!* Surely the Squire can't blame me for this! and yet I don't know—he'll very probably say I must have brought it about myself; and perhaps he'll call me a 'confirmed grumbler,' as he did once before. Well, well; it can't be helped, I suppose."

Having thus philosophically resigned herself to her fate, she proceeded with the task, in which she had been interrupted, of putting her room into something like order;

for in her palmy days Peggy Morison had been remarkable for her extreme neatness; and even now, in spite of the disadvantages under which she laboured, she did her best to keep up the same character.

CHAPTER XI.

"Hearts there are oppressed and weary;
Drop the tear of sympathy:
Whisper words of hope and comfort;
Give, and thy reward shall be
Joy unto thy soul returning
From this perfect fountain-head:
Freely, as thou freely givest,
Shall the grateful light be shed."

Not a word passed between Lily and her attendant until they had reached the house and entered the hall, where they found Mr. Faversham anxiously awaiting their return.

Lily sprang into his arms as soon as she saw him, and exclaimed, in a tone of childish petulance, "Oh, ganpa, she's a very naughty woman! Lily doesn't love her at all."

"What has she been doing?" he inquired with a half smile (perhaps he was rather pleased than otherwise that the child should not think too highly of his troublesome tenant); "did she not admire your doll?"

"Oh, yes," replied Lily, in a slightly

mollified tone, "she couldn't *help* 'miring her; but she's a very unkind woman, for when I told her I would give her some of my meat and pudding every day, she d'clared she wouldn't eat it if I did! and when I offered her *this*"—holding up the contents of the little blue purse—"she *'fused* to take it! Wasn't it unkind of her, ganpa?"

"Is that the half-sovereign I gave you yesterday?" asked the gentleman, in surprise.

Lily nodded her head assentingly.

"Why, then, do you want to get rid of it?" he inquired, in a tone of considerable interest; "don't you know that if Peggy were to take it you would be unable to buy your doll a new hat?"

"Yes; Lily knows that," replied the disappointed child; "but Polly has p'enty more hats, and Lily would *much* rather give the money to Peggy."

"Did the woman absolutely refuse to receive it?" demanded Mr. Faversham, turning sharply round on Mary, and eyeing her with a keen, penetrating glance.

"Indeed, she did, sir," was the unhesitating reply.

"And what put it into Miss Lily's head to offer it to her?" was Mr. Faversham's next abrupt inquiry.

Mary looked a little embarrassed; but Lily took the answer upon herself.

"'Cause I asked her if she had p'enty of b'ead and butter and meat and pudding every day, like Lily has, you know; and she said poor people didn't get much meat and pudding; and I'm sure they *ought* to get it," continued the innocent child, making a comical little grimace, "'cause it's far nicer than d'y b'ead; and then Lily begged her to take the money—and she wouldn't."

"That was certainly behaving better than I should have expected," mused the Squire, as he listened to this simple account; *aloud* he said, "Is it still your wish that she should have it?"

"'Course it is," answered the child, in a voice of decision.

"Come with me, then," he replied, smilingly, taking up his hat, "and we will see what can be done about it."

"Lily *told* her that ganpa would make her have it," remarked his companion, as she danced contentedly along at his side.

"Did you?" rejoined Mr. Faversham, absently; and then he plunged into a train of thought, from which he only emerged when he found himself standing outside the lodge, with Lily trying to attract old Peggy's attention by making as vigorous an onset upon the crazy door as was consistent with her small strength.

Great was the poor woman's consternation on beholding Mr. Faversham; but Lily gave her no time to speak, for, rushing over to her, she seized her by the gown, and, holding up the half-sovereign, cried breathlessly —"Here it is; *now* you *must* take it, for ganpa says so."

"But, my dear——" commenced Peggy, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Ganpa says it," persisted Lily, without allowing her to finish her sentence; and, having thus repeated this (to her) unanswerable argument, she surveyed the old woman with an air of conscious triumph.

Poor Peggy sank into a seat, utterly over-

whelmed by so much energy on the part of her young visitor; and Mr. Faversham, seeing, and perhaps pitying, her bewilderment, came forward, and said, in a voice of far more kindness than he had been accustomed to use when addressing her, "I think you had better do as the child wishes—it would be a pity to disappoint her, you know."

"Bless you, my lamb!" cried the old woman, fairly overcome, as Lily pressed the coin into her hand; "I can't tell how to thank you."

"Now make haste, and get some meat and pudding," suggested the child in an eager whisper; "and then Lily won't call you unkind and naughty no more," she added, in a tone of compunction, which Peggy considered most unnecessary.

While they were talking on this subject, Mr. Faversham, whose eyes had been roving restlessly around the room, walked quietly across the floor, and opened a door at the farthest end, for the purpose of examining into the state of affairs in an inner and somewhat larger apartment.

Peggy had scarcely exaggerated when she

affirmed that the house was "full of damp;" for indeed it could not well be otherwise, considering how many years had elapsed since it had been repaired; and even Mr. Faversham, who usually viewed these matters with such supreme indifference, was unable to repress a slight shiver as he contemplated the interior of this gloomy-looking room, which had once been so full of brightness and comfort.

It was quite empty, except for a few shallow tubs, which were placed at various distances from each other (apparently for the express purpose of receiving any water which might fall from the leaky roof), as Peggy had long before been obliged to remove and probably dispose of the greater part of her furniture; and the bare, damp walls, broken cornice, windows that contained only two or three cracked panes of glass, flooring which afforded a very precarious support, and weather-stained ceiling, from whence could be discerned more than one patch of blue sky,—all combined to form a picture of such utter dreariness that Mr. Faversham turned at last shudderingly

away, reclosed the door as softly as he had opened it; and, going up to Peggy, said, thoughtfully, "Before another winter comes, I must get the house put into some sort of repair for you."

For a moment she gazed at him in open-eyed incredulity, scarcely daring to hope that she had heard aright; then, with a sudden sparkle of intelligence, she answered, gratefully — "Indeed, sir, I shall be most thankful; for I really don't think I could survive another winter such as the last."

Without waiting to hear more, Mr. Faversham hastily wished her "good morning," and left the cottage, accompanied by his young companion, who could not restrain her exclamations of delight at the happy days which were in store for old Peggy, when, her house being thoroughly repaired, and no more damp permitted to penetrate through the roof, she would be able to run about like herself; for Lily never for a moment doubted that directly the *cause* of the afflicted woman's infirmities should be removed, the *effect* also would instantaneously cease: and, although Mr. Faver-

sham's face wore a wondering, equivocal look, as he listened to her rose-coloured anticipations, he did not try to check her enthusiastic imaginings by explaining that the complaint was probably too deeply rooted in Peggy's aged frame to be so easily eradicated.

The subject was by no means a pleasant one; for Mr. Faversham naturally felt uncomfortable as he mentally recognised the fact that it was he, and he alone, who had been the author of all the wretchedness he had just witnessed; and he marvelled at his past blindness, and the narrow-minded selfishness which had rendered him so cold, and hard, and misanthropic; so ready to muse over his own griefs, and bewail his own losses, and yet so indifferent to the sorrows or distresses of his fellow creatures.

Nevertheless, a sense of relief stole into his heart at the remembrance of the promise he had now made. Perhaps Lily's hopefulness, and the self-denying interest she evinced in this humble individual, of whose *existence* she had been ignorant only the day before,

were infectious; or perhaps the idea of performing a kind action was attractive to him from its very novelty, for he found his thoughts continually returning to the cottage they had left; and when Lily besieged him again and again with innumerable questions, as to the precise nature of the improvements which he purposed making in the ruinous-looking place; when they would be commenced, and when completed; what Peggy would say, and what she would do, and others of a similar nature; instead of testifying any impatience or irritability, he entered into her childish feelings with surprising good-nature, and began gradually of his own accord to follow up the subject.

About an hour after Mr. Faversham and Lily had left her, Peggy received another visit from Mary, who having been entrusted by Crossley with some commission for the village shop—a sort of general establishment designated by the name of the Eastwicke Emporium—thought she would look in, as she passed the lodge, to hear how matters had been arranged between Lily and the old woman.

She soon gathered from the latter a circumstantial account of what had happened.

"And only fancy!" concluded Peggy, with a look of supreme complacency; "the lodge is going to be repaired!"

"Is it really?" rejoined Mary, in pleased surprise.

"Yes; the Squire told me so himself! but I shall always believe"—this was added confidentially—"that it is entirely owing to that child."

Mary quite concurred in this opinion, but she merely nodded her head; and Peggy resumed, in a tone of genuine feeling—putting her apron to her eyes as she spoke—"I declare it almost makes me cry when I think of her—the kind-hearted little creature."

"I am rather in a hurry," said her visitor, moving towards the door; "can I do anything for you in the village?"

"Well, my dear, I will not detain you more than a minute," replied Peggy, somewhat hesitatingly; "but I just want to consult you about this money. I have been turning it over in my mind, and, if you think it would not offend the young lady, I

should like to get a nice warm petticoat instead of the things she spoke about. You see it would be much more useful in keeping my poor limbs warm."

"Of course it would," said Mary, with a smile; "and perhaps you might still have something over with which to buy a little tea, or anything else you may wish."

"Then you really think she would not mind?" asked Peggy, anxiously.

"Oh, no! I'm sure she won't, when she knows you prefer it," was the encouraging response.

Having smoothed this difficulty, Mary next expressed her readiness to assist her in laying out the money to the best advantage; which offer being thankfully accepted she hastened off to fulfil her various commissions, and Peggy found, on her return, that she had invested the half-sovereign in a far more profitable manner than she could herself have done.

Mary had, in fact, supplemented the prescribed sum by a slight addition from her own purse, and was therefore enabled to procure several articles besides those which had

been suggested by Peggy, whose pride and gratification knew no bounds when she beheld her little deal table literally covered with packages.

She never suspected Mary's share in the transaction, but evidently ascribed everything to the judiciousness with which she had disposed of the funds entrusted to her; the only observation she made on the subject being to the effect, that it was quite wonderful how much further *some people* could make money go than others.

Lily was certainly disappointed when she first discovered that Peggy had not spent the money in the exact way she had recommended, but she became reconciled on seeing the soft warm flannel which Mary had good-naturedly insisted on taking home with her, and which her nimble fingers rapidly converted into an exceedingly comfortable garment for the scantily-clad woman, whom she reproached herself for having so long neglected.

For Mary was not only a kindly-disposed but also a really conscientious girl; though she had been so depressed by the unvary-

ing coldness and mistrustful, down-trodden usage she received at the Hall previous to Lily's arrival, that she was in imminent danger of collapsing into a state of moral sluggishness from which it might have been difficult to arouse her.

Had she, indeed, been subjected to the same cruel treatment for another year, it would probably have driven her to the very verge of desperation, or else (an alternative even more to be dreaded than the other) rendered her hardened and defiant, neither giving nor expecting love, sympathy, or kindness, from any one. But the antidote had been applied in time. Just as the drooping spirits were beginning to fail, and the weary heart succumb to the manifold anxieties and discouragements of her lot, she became conscious of a sudden change in the surrounding atmosphere; and from henceforth Crossley's bitterness and mistrust, her fierce words, and still fiercer looks when displeased; her harsh, overbearing manner, and the stinging emphasis with which she was in the habit of imputing the very worst motives to the

most trivial and unintentional contravention of her orders, ceased to rankle in Mary's mind; being fully counterbalanced by the sweet, confiding trust and little fondling ways of her fascinating young charge, on whom she soon began to concentrate all her affections, and to whose comfort she devoted herself with such sedulous care that even the fault-finding housekeeper could not fail to be, on the whole, satisfied with the exemplary manner in which she performed the duties of her new office.

CHAPTER XII.

"Wouldst thou from sorrow find a sweet relief?
Or is thy heart oppressed with woes untold?
Balm wouldst thou gather for corroding grief,
Pour blessings round thee like a shower of gold?
'Tis when the rose is wrapped in many a fold,
Close to its heart, the worm is wasting there
Its life and beauty; not when, all unrolled,
Leaf after leaf, its bosom, rich and fair,
Breathes freely its perfume throughout the ambient air."

CARLOS WILCOX.

MR. FAVERSHAM had no intention of withdrawing from the promise he had made to his old gatekeeper; but even if he had been so disposed he could scarcely have done it without occasioning the keenest disappointment to Lily, whose interest in the projected improvements was not at all lessened, though days and weeks passed away without any apparent step being taken towards executing them. He explained to her, however, that the delay arose not from himself, but the persons who were employed to carry out his plans; as he

had issued his own orders the very day after his last visit to the cottage.

It was a proud moment for Peggy when the workmen at length made their appearance, and the process of renovation commenced in good earnest. The noise and confusion which attended their efforts to restore the dilapidated building into something of its former likeness must have been a source of considerable discomfort to the feeble woman; but she preferred enduring it to accepting Crossley's ungraciously-worded proposal that she should occupy a room at the Hall until the lodge was ready for her reception.

The inconvenience was trifling, she said, when Mary remonstrated with her for refusing to accept Crossley's invitation; and if it had been ten times as much she would still have chosen to put up with it rather than force herself upon a person whom she knew hated her, and only asked her because she thought it would please the young lady.

Strange to say, this independent conduct on the part of old Peggy seemed to have the

effect of raising her in the housekeeper's estimation; for, although the latter did not again repeat the invitation she had at first so reluctantly accorded to her, she began from time to time to show her many little kindnesses which she would never have dreamt of extending to her in former days, and for which Peggy was proportionately grateful.

How true it is that one good deed often leads to another. It was so in this case, for Mr. Faversham scarcely ever went to see how the work was progressing without being struck by some fresh improvement which appeared wanting to render the place really comfortable; and so, instead of adhering to his original intention of merely doing what at first sight appeared absolutely necessary, such as making the roof water-tight, and getting a few trifling repairs done to the interior of the dwelling, he launched forth into various expenses which he had not by any means contemplated, and never paused in his praiseworthy undertakings until the entire house had been perfectly restored.

He felt himself amply recompensed for

all his trouble when he listened to Lily's artless expressions of infantile delight; and had anything been wanting to complete his gratification it would have been furnished by Peggy's excited countenance as she hobbled about from one room to another, for the express purpose of showing the young lady what had been done—now pointing triumphantly to the freshly-white-washed ceilings, solid flooring, new windows and doors, and all the other minutiæ connected with the recent alterations; and then pausing to expatiate, with peculiar emphasis, on the beauties of the wonderful roses and lilies so plentifully besprinkled upon the gay coloured paper (her own choice) which adorned the walls.

By-and-by, owing to Lily's interest with Crossley, an old but thick and still serviceable carpet found its way from the Hall to the lodge, and several disused articles of furniture soon followed suit, until the vacuum caused by the unavoidable disposal of so many of Peggy's cherished moveables was quite filled up, and the now pleasant and cheerful abode forcibly reminded its

contented inmate of past happy days, when she had trod life's chequered pathway side by side with those who had rejoiced in her joy and made her cares their own.

Before another summer arrived there were roses and jessamine climbing in rich profusion around the pretty porch; while the deserted little garden at the rear of the house was brilliant with many coloured flowers.

And as Peggy's temporal condition was ameliorated, so likewise did her character become softened and improved. For though it may be true—and alas! we know it *is* true—that uninterrupted prosperity does not conduce to our spiritual welfare, yet we should not therefore take it for granted that the converse must be the case—that *because* a man is poor, for instance, often lacking the bare necessaries of life, and deprived of those innumerable advantages which may have fallen to our own lot, he will, as a matter of course, be in a more favourable position for realising the paramount importance of religion.

Could *he* only (if indeed we may suppose

such a case) who had passed his whole earthly existence in some drear and desolate spot, with no graceful trees to wave their leafy branches around him, no fragrant flowers to spring up at his feet, no gentle streamlet to murmur at his side, or glorious sunlight to dance athwart his pathway, or blue sky to shine above him, really appreciate the perfection of beauty which will burst upon our enraptured vision in the better country? Might we not rather imagine, that however much *he* may *admire*, and *wonder*, and *enjoy*, the power of thorough and complete *appreciation* will be reserved in a far greater degree for those who have from their very childhood had an eye for the beauties of the *natural world*—who can gaze upon the purple mountains, the golden sunsets, the rivers and the lakes, the smiling valleys, and the ever-changing ocean, and discern in all loveliness so fresh and varying, harmonies so soft and soothing, mysteries so sublime and entrancing, that their spirits revel in blissful ecstasy, while friend or brother perchance stands by marvelling at the enthusiasm which enables *them*

to see so much while others can distinguish so little?

Do we not often find in our own experience that it is when our cup of blessing seems filled to overflowing our souls expand the most in grateful love to the Great Giver? Is it not then that we the most naturally, and from the very depths of our glad hearts, exclaim:—"*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?*"

So, as regards our poorer brethren, we shall, I believe, as a rule discover, that by scattering a few of earth's flowers around their dreary pathway, and encircling them with a little of this world's sunshine—a few tokens of human kindness—real, substantial comforts, if it be in our power, *but if not*, oh, let us freely bestow what we have—hopeful words to inspire the fainting heart with courage, gentle smiles to smoothe the brow of care, and, above all, that most precious of all boons, the gift of true and tender sympathy (accompanied by our counsels and our prayers)—we shall be doing much towards drawing their hearts to better things.

At all events, it was so in the case of

Peggy Morison. Adversity and neglect had produced a very deteriorating influence over a disposition which was by nature neither discontented nor morose; and she had gone on from one year to another nursing her grievances and bemoaning her hard fate, until, having thoroughly convinced herself that she was one of the most ill-used individuals in the world, she sank into a permanent state of morbid dissatisfaction, approaching sometimes to a kind of sullen defiance.

But as prosperous days once more dawned upon her, so did the dawning of a new life spring up within her.

The goodness of God led her to repentance; and from henceforth she began to consider how she could in some humble way serve Him who had remembered her in her low estate, and put it into the hearts of others to minister to her necessities.

Her rheumatism did not altogether leave her, but she often assured Lily (who was earnest and constant in her inquiries as to the reason of her still continuing lame) that the pain was greatly lessened; and as

she sat in her comfortable easy-chair—a gift from the Hall—wrapped in a comfortable shawl which had been actually conveyed to her from Crossley's own wardrobe, before her now bright and cheerful fire, and reflected upon her many mercies, she felt constrained, while thanking God for these lesser bounties of His providence, to thank Him also for the unfathomable love which led Him to spare not that "unspeakable gift"—*His only Son.*

Almost as soon as the lodge was completed, Mr. Faversham found his attention suddenly engrossed by something else. He had often wondered at Lily's intense love for flowers, and smiled to himself as he noticed how eagerly she would run off to gather them whenever she had an opportunity. With what admiration she regarded them all—the meek-eyed daisy and hardy periwinkle, no less than others which cost so much care and culture—and how deftly her little fingers would arrange them before handing them over to Mary to put into water.

The shrubberies and gardens belonging to

the Hall were in such a tangled, overgrown condition that it was almost impossible for her to find her way through them without receiving many falls, to say nothing of the risk of getting cold by walking through the long dank grass. Her floral treasures, therefore, were for the most part collected during her daily walks with Mr. Faversham, or from some of the untidy beds near the house, where weeds and flowers struggled for the supremacy (to the very decided advantage of the former), so that she was only gradually made acquainted with the full extent of the devastation and decay which reigned over the whole estate.

One lovely summer's morning, however, they chanced to enter the grounds by a different gate from the one by which they usually returned, and after making their way with some difficulty through the meandering paths of the rampant shrubberies, found themselves at length inside an extensive garden, at one end of which stood a long range of conservatories, glittering in the sun.

On first beholding this wilderness-looking

place, Lily had gazed around her with a perplexed and puzzled air, as if wondering in her own mind at the strangely disordered aspect of everything she saw; but when she caught sight of the greenhouses, her eyes sparkled with delight, and she bounded joyously forward, exclaiming in great glee, "*Now* ganpa will show Lily the f'owers!"

A cloud came over Mr. Faversham's face as she spoke thus, and he began to wish he had chosen some other path, instead of raising expectations which must, he knew, only end in vexation.

When within a few yards of the glittering edifice, Lily almost involuntarily slackened her pace. She seemed to feel instinctively that all was not right, though she was evidently quite unprepared for the utter desolation which met her gaze as she slowly ascended the steps leading to the centre dome-shaped building, and putting her face close to the glass door looked in. It was full of emptiness, or perhaps more properly speaking *rubbish;* for the wood-work had given way in various places, and the debris occasioned by this, and also by innumerable

broken flower-pots, shattered panes of glass, and heaps of earth, was considerable. Not a single flower was visible, so with a grave little shake of the head, and a look of extreme disappointment upon the fair young face, she returned to Mr. Faversham's side, saying plaintively, "Lily 'spected to see the f'owers; and there isn't one there!"

This was the only remark she made; but the old man could not forget the perplexed expression of her countenance, nor the sorrowful tones of her voice as she gave utterance to the simple fact. They haunted him by day, and disturbed his dreams by night; until at last to his own intense satisfaction he suddenly bethought himself of a way by which Lily's passion for flowers might be gratified, while at the same time a pleasant place would be provided, in which she could find amusement when the weather was too inclement for her to venture out of doors.

As soon as his plans were definitely arranged, he summoned Crossley to his presence, and quite electrified that worthy personage by the energy with which he an-

nounced his intention of getting the long-neglected winter garden put into immediate working order. Now, this winter garden had been at one time a source of unfailing interest to every one at the Hall. No expense was spared in its erection, no trouble deemed too great to furnish it with the rarest flowers and the loveliest decorations which art could devise or money purchase; and during the lifetime of Mrs. Faversham it had been kept in the most exquisite order, and was the favourite resort both of herself and her children. It contained two principal entrances, one from the lawn, the other leading into an oval-shaped apartment, commonly known as the pink drawing-room, on account of its painted walls, rich silken draperies, sofas, chairs, and ottomans, being all of a pale pink colour, and even the heavy Brussels carpet was covered with tiny sprigs of the delicate pink-tinted heath, whose bell-like blossoms were here and there contrasted with the graceful fronds of some small kind of fern. This had been Mrs. Faversham's usual sitting-room, but her husband had never once

entered it since her death; and he still seemed reluctant to do so; for, while superintending the workmen, who were soon busily engaged in endeavouring to restore the winter garden to its original beauty, he invariably made his entrance and exit by the outer door, instead of availing himself of the shorter and more convenient route through the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Rest, weary heart!
From all thy silent griefs, and secret pain,
Thy profitless regrets and longings vain;
Wisdom and love have ordered all the past,
All shall be blessedness and light at last;
Cast off the cares that have so long opprest—
Rest, sweetly rest."

As the pink drawing-room was at some distance from that part of the house where Mr. Faversham and Lily spent the greatest portion of their time, it so happened that the latter knew nothing of the revolution which had been going on in the winter garden until it was all over.

For Crossley had strictly enjoined Mary to refrain from mentioning the subject when in the presence of her young charge, as she thought it more than probable, she said, that the Squire intended it as a pleasant surprise for the child, and would in any case much prefer telling her himself.

Which was quite true. Only it would not

have occurred to Mr. Faversham to put his half-defined wishes into words; and he was really surprised when week after week glided on without a question being asked him by his talkative little companion as to the business which so entirely engrossed his own mind.

In due course of time, however, everything was finished; and he took her by the hand one day and led her across the lawn, and over a broad terrace walk to the sunny side of the mansion; and, opening the door of a large octangular glass building, ushered her into what seemed to her enraptured gaze a veritable fairy palace.

Mr. Faversham stepped back to enjoy her surprise; and when he saw the wondering, amazed look with which she first regarded the unexpected scene, rapidly exchanged for an expression of unmistakable delight, he was conscious of a thrill of pure, unselfish gratification such as he had rarely before experienced, and which in itself was enough to compensate him for all the exertions he had made on Lily's behalf.

"O the f'owers! the *beautiful* f'owers!"

cried the child, drawing a long breath of admiration, and putting her two little hands together with a gesture of extraordinary gladness.

"I thought you would like them," said Mr. Faversham, smiling at her transport.

Then he accompanied her round the place, drawing her attention to whatever he thought would interest her, and answering her eager questions with the most praiseworthy assiduity. He had evidently taken the utmost pains to make everything look as near like what it had formerly been as possible.

Flowers of every colour and kind were there, from the rarest exotics to the simple favourites of our own clime. The lovely passion-flower, with its trailing blossoms; white and pink and variegated camellias, looking so pure and perfect among their glossy dark leaves; fragrant heliotropes and verbenas; roses and lilies, sweet-scented mignonette, and an endless variety of red and white geraniums were blooming in rich profusion, mingled with the familiar jessamine, and creepers of other countries.

The floor of the building was inlaid with

a kind of mosaic-work, very rare and beautiful. The walls were for the most part composed of stained glass, which produced a pleasing effect by delicately tempering what might otherwise have been too excessive a glare of light, without in anywise detracting from the brilliancy of the flowers. In the exact centre of the floor stood a fountain, unceasingly throwing up its cool refreshing spray, while dozens of gold and silver fish gaily disported themselves in its basin. An aquarium occupied a recess at one end of the garden, beyond which was a fernery well stocked with British and foreign varieties, that had been planted amongst the old rock-work, where a stream of water glided mysteriously in and out, making one marvel whence it came and whither it went.

Several Chinese lamps were suspended in various parts of the building, so that it could when required be lighted up; and here and there were chairs, and small round tables, placed in out-of-the-way corners, where any lover of solitude might sit, surrounded by flowers, working or reading, or perhaps weaving bright day-dreams (none the less

fascinating because never to be realised), insensibly succumbing to the balmy influence of many an odorous blossom which shed its unseen fragrance around, whilst listening to the soothing plash of the fountain as it rose and fell, or the murmur of the little streamlet pursuing its perpetual ripple among the green-leafed ferns.

More than an hour had been spent in this lovely spot before it occurred to Mr. Faversham to glance at his watch. Then, finding that it was already past their usual dinner-hour, he hastily prepared to depart by the same way they had arrived. But directly they stepped outside, a pelting storm of rain came on with such violence that they were obliged to return to their former place of shelter, with the alternative of remaining there until the storm should subside, or else enter the house by means of the pink drawing-room, the door of which stood invitingly open.

As far as Lily was concerned the matter was speedily settled; for, however painful the associations connected with this apartment might be to himself, there could be no

possible reason why *she* should not make use of it as often as she pleased.

Without the slightest hesitation, therefore, he advised her to "run in that way," and as she turned to obey him he stood looking dubiously after her, half inclined to follow her, and yet shrinking most painfully from doing so.

While he was still wavering, Lily happened to stumble over a footstool; whereupon Mr. Faversham, forgetting everything else in his anxiety to discover whether she was in any way hurt, sprang hastily forward, raised her with the utmost carefulness from the carpet, and, having assured himself that she had sustained no injury, he proceeded to assist her in recovering some flowers which had fallen from her hand, and were now scattered in every direction upon the floor. This done he waited patiently until she should have arranged them to her satisfaction, casting meanwhile a glance of melancholy recognition upon the old familiar objects by which he suddenly found himself surrounded.

There stood the grand pianoforte, which had been used to discourse such excellent

music in times past. *There* also stood his wife's harp, over which her skilful fingers had so often and so lovingly strayed. Her work-table, too, still retained its accustomed place near one of the long windows, whilst the very chair she had been wont to occupy lingered close beside it. Each relic of the departed seemed to possess a singular and separate attraction for Mr. Faversham, and though sadness mingled with his musings, they were on the whole of a far less painful nature than he had anticipated.

Even when his eyes were involuntarily fastened upon a full-length portrait of his son, hanging up in its well-remembered place, between that of himself and the late Mrs. Faversham, and then passed on to gaze with wistful earnestness upon *her* lovely countenance, he did not experience any of that intense bitterness which had hitherto visited him whenever he ventured to think of his losses. On the contrary, he felt softened and impressed by the perfect calm, and sweet, unruffled serenity which rested on those much-admired features; and a kind of awe stole over him on being thus, as it

were, brought (for the first time since their death) into the actual presence of those for whom he had so long and so hopelessly mourned.

It seemed to solemnise his mind, and made him realise something of the littleness of all earthly things, and the folly of grief so inordinate and absorbing as his own. A vague doubt, too, flashed across him as to the *nature* of this grief. Could it be possible that it was to a great extent characterised by selfishness? and if so, how culpably he had acted in wasting so many years in fruitless lamentations, and wild, rebellious, and persistent murmurings against the stroke which, by removing his loved ones from his embrace, had (though affording nothing but pain to himself) really been the means of emancipating them from all care and suffering.

When Mr. Faversham last visited that room the family group had been complete. *Now* Ellen's portrait was absent! and, as he detected the change, a puzzled, surprised look passed over his face. After a momentary consideration, however, he concluded that it must have been removed by his own orders

on the occasion of her marriage. Not that he had the slightest recollection of having ever given any such directions. Still there was no other way of accounting for its disappearance, and as he retained only a very imperfect remembrance of all that had occurred during the few weeks after he first heard of the irrevocable step which his daughter had taken, it was of course quite possible that he might have given utterance to some of the uncomfortable feelings which were just then stirring in his mind.

A change was gradually coming over him with regard to this much-neglected daughter. He began to picture to himself all that she might have been to him, had he so willed it. He remembered with what anxious solicitude she had been wont to anticipate his wants; how eagerly she had striven to please him, and how coldly and sternly he had repulsed her, whenever she made an effort to break down the invisible barrier which separated them from each other's confidence and affection. He remembered, too, how patiently she had borne with his many failings—his

peevishness, eccentricities, and unreasonable caprices,—how earnestly she had promised him, that if he would only consent to her occupying her proper position as mistress of his establishment, she would do her very utmost to follow in the footsteps of the mother she had lost, and bring back, if not perfect happiness, at least peace and comfort to their distracted and miserable home.

And then he saw her as she afterwards appeared, when he had effectually succeeded in chilling the warm, youthful enthusiasm, and tender daughterly impulses—when all hope had fled, and she wandered like a drooping lily about the house, still patient and uncomplaining, until at length the crisis arrived, and her sufferings could no longer be concealed.

How vividly all these scenes were photographed upon his undying memory! He no longer wondered at Ellen's marriage, but rather at the perversity of his own exacting spirit, which had led him to expect to receive everything, while giving nothing in return.

How could he for one moment have imagined that she would thus go on devoting her young life to one who was daily and hourly showing her, as plainly as words and looks *could* show, that her presence was an intolerable burden to him—nay, that her very existence was a source of pain and discomfort?

Her letters, too, written after her marriage, and even since he had heaped upon her the most cruel and undeserved abuse, how touching and entreating they were! and yet he had never condescended to notice them; never even troubled himself to ascertain whether she was living or dead.

Then a doubt stole into his mind—a hideous doubt, which made his face grow pale, and stopped for a moment the pulsations of his heart. Could she be dead? or if alive, might not she and her husband be struggling with poverty, whilst he—her father, who had every right to provide for her—was in the possession of unemployed wealth, a very small portion of which might raise her to comparative affluence?

He regretted now that he should have

neglected to make any inquiries into their worldly circumstances, as it was not improbable that his past injustice towards them would deter them—however urgent their need—from applying to him for assistance.

This thought had the effect of a spur upon him, goading him to action, and while under its impelling influence he wrote to Mrs. Lindsay, the lady with whom Ellen had been residing for some time previous to her marriage, desiring her to furnish him with a few particulars respecting his daughter's movements, and also expressing a wish to be informed of her present address.

The only reply to this communication consisted of a brief intimation of Mrs. Lindsay's death, which had taken place more than a year before; and Mr. Faversham was thus obliged to seek elsewhere the information which he had fully expected to receive from her.

No reliable tidings reached him, however, and he arrived at length at the conclusion that Ellen must be still abroad; after which he subsided into his usual quiescent con-

dition, encouraging himself with the hope that he might even yet hear from her, in the event of her being at any time exposed to difficulties from which he might have it in his power to relieve her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"To you 'tis given
To wake sweet nature's untaught lays;
Beneath the arch of heaven
To chirp away a life of praise.

"Then spread each wing
Far, far above, o'er lakes and lands,
And join the choirs that sing
In yon blue dome not reared with hands."

SPRAGUE.

THE ice having been once broken, Mr. Faversham did not again manifest the least reluctance to repeat his visit to the pink drawing-room, and he soon fell into the habit of spending a certain part of every day there, until he became almost as much at home in it as he had been in the old library, to which he so long and so exclusively confined himself.

It was such a pleasure to him to sit there, observing the movements of his youthful companion, as she flitted in and out among the flowers, herself as fair a blossom (in his

partial eyes) as any of those by which she was surrounded.

His satisfaction had been extreme on discovering that the expectations he had formed in regard to the attractions of the winter garden were more than fulfilled. It provided Lily with an inexhaustible and ever-varying fund of amusement, and prevented her from growing weary, or suffering as much as she would otherwise have done from the want of suitable playmates.

She watched over the progress of each plant with the most delighted interest, being always on the alert to detect the introduction of some fresh variety, or point with an air of childish exultation to the unfolding of some lovely blossom, whose beauties she fancied Mr. Faversham did not sufficiently appreciate.

Even the fishes claimed a portion of her admiration, and by-and-by she had some feathered pets to talk to and make much of. For Mr. Faversham, remembering how fond his own children had been of that corner of the winter garden which was appropriated to an aviary, naturally concluded that she also

would find in it a great resource if he were to get it stocked with a number of brilliant-plumaged occupants, some of whom might amuse her by their diverting endeavours to imitate the human voice. For his own part, he considered such noisy companions rather in the light of a nuisance than anything else; but he never thought of that, so anxious was he to do anything which might in the slightest degree add to her happiness.

He was somewhat disappointed, however, by the doubtful welcome which Lily accorded to her new friends when they first made their appearance; for having taken considerable pains in their selection, he had been fully persuaded in his own mind that the very sight of them would be enough to throw her into an ecstasy of pleasure; whereas it appeared from the tender, compassionate glances with which she regarded them, that she was inclined to look upon them as *prisoners*, whom it would be more seemly to condole with than rejoice over.

Her experience of birds had been limited to those which enjoy such unrestrained liberty in nature's wide domain, flying hither

and thither, free as the wind which comes we know not how, and goes we know not whither, or the joyous sunshine which dances so merrily about our pathway, lighting up the careworn brow, and making the saddened heart to sing; and although her blue eyes expanded in astonishment at the gay colours with which some of these were adorned, she could not help feeling sorry that they should be thus deprived of the privileges peculiar to their kind.

"Poor birdies!" she said, in her sweet lisping tones, after gazing at them for some time in silence.

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Faversham, looking very astonished; "don't you admire them?"

"Oh, yes, they are so p'itty," she replied with a sober little smile; "only——"

"Only what?" said the gentleman, eager to find out her real feelings.

"Lily's af'aid they don't like it," returned the child, in a low, confidential tone, as if she did not wish the listening birds to hear her.

"Why should they not like it?" inquired

Mr. Faversham, half amused and half vexed. "I am sure they look very comfortable."

"Yes—p'raps," hesitated Lily.

"Only see what a commodious place they have to move about in," pursued the other, scanning the interior of the aviary with a critical eye; "and some of them are not even confined at all."

Judging from the dubious expression of Lily's speaking countenance, as she turned to examine into the state of these "unconfined ones," it would appear that *her* ideas on this subject did not coincide with his own; and it was most amusing to observe the solemnity of her manner as she remarked in a voice of the utmost seriousness, "*Lily* wouldn't like to be put up there"—pointing to a small marble pedestal which stood at some little distance—"with a chain round her leg!"

"No, I dare say not," assented Mr. Faversham, smiling at the oddity of the comparison; "but birds are different from people."

"Do *they* like it?" eagerly questioned the child.

Mr. Faversham was fairly nonplussed. He could not truthfully affirm that he considered this bondage-state to be a particularly congenial one for them; neither could he, on the other hand, bring himself to confess that it was possible they might have preferred remaining in their own native wilds, had they been allowed a voice in the matter; but, after a moment's reflection, he did the next best thing, which was to explain to Lily that if he were to give these tropical birds their liberty it would probably be at the expense of their lives.

Then he proceeded to expatiate upon the many advantages which they possessed over their late companions in captivity, whom he had recently seen crowded together in a close and uncomfortable shop in the very heart of London; but it was not until he had positively assured her that the plan which she in her childish simplicity suggested as being perfectly feasible—of sending them back to their own sunny land—was quite out of the question, that Lily became in any wise reconciled to their detention. She was such a bright, sparkling little sunbeam herself, and

so thoroughly able to appreciate the pleasures of a life of unfettered freedom, that it seemed to her unsophisticated mind a most barbarous and unfeeling thing to encroach upon the rights of these gorgeously-apparelled birds, and transport them from one country to another, merely for the sake of personal gain or amusement!

When she at length discovered, however, that much as she might wish it, she could not alter the fact of their being captives, she devoted herself to the task of trying by every means in her small power to render them happy in their new home.

While liking and admiring them all, she yet had one special favourite, who received by far the greatest portion of her care and attention. This favourite was in the matter of appearance decidedly the most unprepossessing among them, being a misshapen, sulky, dwarfish old grey parrot, very sparsely adorned with feathers of the dingiest hue, which gave him a faded, washed-out appearance; and disfigured, moreover, by the total loss of one of his eyes, which caused him to make the strangest grimaces and

contortions whenever he desired to bring himself within full view of any particular person or thing.

Mr. Faversham had been induced to purchase this grotesque creature solely on account of his having earned for himself the reputation of being extremely clever. Which character he certainly deserved; although, owing to his ugliness and ill-nature, he was not generally popular. This latter fact may probably have accounted for the partiality of Lily's own conduct. She saw that whenever Crossley, or the housemaid, or Mary, or the staid-looking elderly man who had charge of the winter garden, came to visit her pets, they invariably turned their backs upon the shrivelled-up specimen of the parrot tribe, who went by the name of *One-eye*, while One-eye's companions received quite an ovation at their hands; and when Lily remonstrated against the injustice of the thing, they would shrug their shoulders, or shake their heads, or perhaps call him by the misnomer of a "little imp," and declare they could not bear the sight of him.

And the tender-hearted child, who evidently imagined that One-eye's feelings must be grievously outraged by the studious neglect he met with from every one else, redoubled her own efforts to make up for their remissness.

Crossley expressed herself as being in no wise astonished at Lily's preference for so ugly a bird. "It was just like some mothers," she condescendingly remarked to Mary, "who often cling more fondly and tenaciously by far to those of their children who happen to be sickly and unattractive, than others who are radiant with health and beauty."

But there was still another reason why Lily should like One-eye; he treated *her* much better than he did the rest of the world! If a stranger approached his perch he would probably fly into a rage, and give utterance to a torrent of angry exclamations; or else relapse into a fit of obstinate sullenness, from which it would be impossible to rouse him; but he allowed Lily to do what she pleased with him, and never on any occasion tried to injure her. Perhaps he

considered that the small, fairy-like figure which hovered so gracefully and incessantly about him, and talked to him in such sweet, lisping tones, must be of an altogether different race from his other visitors; or it may be that he had a sort of consciousness that the sentiments with which she regarded him were of a more friendly nature than theirs; and he wished accordingly to mark his own appreciation of her kindness, by conducting himself towards her with an unusual degree of courtesy and respect.

One of his peculiarities lay in the facility with which he could repeat the most difficult sentences, and imitate the most extraordinary and discordant noises; but if any one presumed to take advantage of this power by trying to teach him something new, he would be instantly seized with a fit of obstinacy, which prevented him from speaking at all for hours, and even days together; although, when left to himself, he was constantly surprising people by the many startling and often amusing observations he made on passing events.

Crossley detested him, because of the

insulting way he had of laughing at her whenever she found occasion to administer a reproof to Mary in his presence. He would remain perfectly quiet until she had commenced her scolding, and was waxing warm and excited; and then, suddenly and without a moment's hesitation, break forth into a loud, harsh, mocking laugh, which he repeated again and again, as if highly delighted at his own efforts; only pausing from time to time in order to vary the performance, by giving utterance to some of the very expressions Crossley had just been addressing with dignified severity to the unfortunate nurse, who experienced at such seasons the greatest difficulty in maintaining a grave exterior, while being exposed to this double fire; especially as Crossley always became furious at hearing her words thus ludicrously re-echoed, and herself, as it were, held up to ridicule, by an audacious bird whom she affected to despise, and yet felt almost ready to accuse of *malice prepense*, so irritated was she by his unseemly conduct!

As for Lily, she exonerated One-eye from

all blame by explaining with childish dignity that the poor bird didn't know any better, and must therefore be excused, no matter what he did or said. "He laughs at me, too," she observed apologetically to Crossley, "'cause I want him to say 'good morning, Lily,' and he won't!"

"Not he!" assented the housekeeper, in a tone of intense disgust; "he's far too ill-natured for that!"

"But he likes me," continued Lily, quickly; "for he stands on one foot and twists his head round, and looks at me, and then he listens quite good, till I think he's learning it, but he isn't at all; for when I 'spect him to say it, he just b'gins to laugh!"

"He's a nasty, disagreeable bird," was Crossley's disparaging response; "and if I were you, my dear, I wouldn't trouble myself about him."

"Lily doesn't *t'ouble* about him," returned the child, opening her eyes very wide; "Lily only plays with him."

"Well, if he really amuses you it's all right," replied Crossley, in the gracious

tone she usually adopted when addressing her; "but take care he doesn't bite you."

Saying which, she departed to her own territory, marvelling at the infatuation which could lead so fair and lovable a child to find any pleasure in the society of such a frightful and cross-grained creature as One-eye!

Lily meanwhile persevered in her attempts to induce him to repeat the sentence she wished. For this purpose she visited him the first thing after she was dressed in the morning, and the last thing before she retired to rest at night. She tried coaxing and flattery, alternately with gentle chidings and vigorous shakings of the little head, but all without success! One-eye was far too cunning to be entrapped by a few pretty speeches, accompanied though they undoubtedly were by an unlimited supply of sugar and sponge cakes.

He did not scold, or sulk, or snap at her, as he would probably have done had he been dealing with any one else; but he accepted caresses and remonstrances with equal complacency, and characteristic indifference, and while lending an apparently

attentive ear to all she said, he pursued the even tenor of his own way, regardless alike of her approbation or displeasure.

Sometimes the child would fancy that he was, to use her own language, "saying, 'good morning, Lily,' over in his mind," previous to uttering it aloud; but she was doomed to frequent disappointment; for just at the critical moment when she was breathlessly expecting to hear him pronounce the words she had laboured so diligently to teach him, he would abruptly break the silence by delivering with the profoundest gravity some singularly inappropriate sentiment; or else startle her by one of those fearfully discordant screams which made Mr. Faversham mentally anathematise him as an intolerable nuisance, and even forced Lily to run away with her hands put hastily to her ears, to shut out as much of the dreadful sound as possible.

After several little scenes similar to this had been enacted, and Lily was beginning to feel very indignant at his perverseness, One-eye took the opportunity of regaining his former place in her esteem—not by saying the right

thing, oh, no! that was more than could be looked for from such an independent bird—but another sentence which he had doubtless heard a hundred times, but which, from its being so totally unexpected, afforded Lily nearly as much gratification as if it had been exactly what she wanted.

Mr. Faversham was sitting just inside the pink drawing-room. A newspaper which he had lately been reading lay across his knee, but he was at that particular moment in a brown study, when these words pierced his ear like a trumpet, making the newspaper fall to the ground, and himself rise to his feet—

"Ganpa! Lily wants you."

Without an instant's delay he stepped into the winter garden, where he found the child in convulsions of laughter, while the author of her mirth was standing with his head on one side, gazing slyly down upon her, as if to ask the reason of her hilarity.

Mr. Faversham looked dubiously from one to the other, but ere he could institute any inquiry into the matter One-eye's voice was again heard above the chattering and twitter-

ing of the other birds—loud, clear, and distinct—

"Ganpa! Lily wants you."

An exclamation of surprise broke from Mr. Faversham's lips as he listened to this authoritative language, and he unconsciously turned to Lily for an explanation.

"Oh, ganpa! isn't it funny?" she cried, with a fresh peal of laughter; "I begged and begged him to say 'good morning, Lily,' and he wouldn't; and then I was just scolding him for being so naughty, and telling him I shouldn't care for him any more, and he 'mediately called out *that* as loud as ever he could! Now," she added, triumphantly, "I must go and tell Mary;" and she hastened off as fast as her nimble little feet would carry her to impart the wonderful tidings to her confidential attendant, whilst Mr. Faversham, with a smile and a shrug, returned to his arm-chair and his newspaper.

CHAPTER XV.

"There are briars besetting every path
That call for patient care;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer;
But a lowly heart that leans on Thee
Is happy anywhere."

WARING.

WILL it greatly surprise my readers to be told that Mr. Faversham attended no place of worship? I think not; for when once a man has grown hard and sullen and rebellious, with a heart full of stubbornness and pride, and eyes wholly blinded by spiritual darkness, he naturally makes an effort to free himself from a yoke which has grown most galling and insupportable to him: the very externals of religion become in fact irksome and oppressive, and he feels that it would be mere mockery for him to profess that which he does not believe, or continue to engage in the outward forms of devotion, while the *spirit*, which alone could render these ser-

vices acceptable to God, or profitable to himself, is lacking.

But Crossley was a regular church-goer. That is to say, she made a point of putting on her best black silk gown, and an imposing looking gray satin bonnet, ornamented with enormous bows of white ribbon, and occupying her accustomed seat exactly opposite the carved oak-pulpit in the old parish-church every Sunday morning.

When there, she conducted herself with great propriety; audibly repeating responses, and joining in the different parts of the service with much apparent fervour and grave decorum, though with an air which seemed to imply that whatever might be the case in respect to her fellow-worshippers, there could be no possible doubt that *she* at least was performing a decidedly meritorious action, by the edifying manner in which she united *her* confessions and supplications with others so much more wicked and undeserving than herself!

She was apt to allude with exceeding complacency to the punctuality which characterised her attendance at public worship, and

pass severe strictures upon those of her acquaintance who failed either from inability or inclination to follow her excellent example, although it is greatly to be feared that, as a rule, her own devotional exercises were entirely limited to this one morning service, the rest of the Sabbath being spent in any way which pleasure or convenience dictated.

Mary was permitted to go out in the afternoons, and during her absence Mr. Faversham assumed the charge of his young guest, always relinquishing her with such unfeigned reluctance that no one could fail to perceive how much satisfaction he derived from her society.

As for Lily, she enjoyed her evenings with Mary perhaps more than any other part of the day; for the conscientious servant exerted herself to the very utmost to prevent her active-minded little companion from feeling dull, or missing her toys and doll, which she invariably put away every Saturday night, and did not again look at until Monday morning. This habit Lily commenced quite of her own accord; from which Mary inferred, that she had been encouraged to do

so in her old home. She also concluded, from the sober, matter-of-fact air with which she listened to the Bible stories she read to her, and the artless pleasure she took in trying to learn some simple texts and verses of hymns suited to her childish understanding, that it was nothing new for her to be thus employed; and on more than one occasion the astonished nurse discovered that what she had been taking the greatest pains to explain, under the impression that Lily would be hearing it for the first time in her life, was really as well known to the child as to herself!

Often did Mary reflect upon the advantages of her present position to that which she had formerly occupied in the Faversham household, and congratulate herself upon the exchange she had made from the kitchen to the nursery—more particularly when obliged, as was sometimes the case, to become an eye or ear witness of scenes which painfully reminded her of what she had often gone through in her own experience; to say nothing of those perpetually recurring disputes which took place between Crossley and

her new assistant, and which, although arising from the merest trifles, yet seemed, for the time being, of such vast importance to each of the two combatants, that an unenlightened spectator might have supposed that the fate of the whole world depended upon their proper adjustment.

To Lily, the housekeeper was ever the same—kind, attentive, and affectionate; and Mary even fancied that her general disposition had undergone some sort of improvement.

And she was right: Crossley *had* improved! but so imperceptibly, that it would have been utterly impossible for any one who had not known her previous to Lily's appearance at the Hall to realise the fact; for she still loved to find fault, and continued to exercise her authority with unabated severity; embracing every conceivable opportunity of domineering over those who were placed under her control; until the irritating pungency of her oft-reiterated expostulations and reproofs, together with her overbearing and arbitrary manner, were enough to provoke the most patient and long-suffering of

her victims into a state of insubordination and revolt.

Mary did not, of course, escape. On the contrary, she still continued to receive many a discouraging rebuff from the lynx-eyed housekeeper, who seemed never better pleased than when she could succeed in detecting some real or imaginary flaw in the character or practice of those with whom she had to do; but the amiable girl had long before this become so interested in her new duties, and so warmly attached to her fascinating little mistress, that she felt absolutely grateful to Crossley for having been the means of providing her with a situation which had proved in many ways congenial to her.

Gradually, too, Mary was learning to perform her most trivial actions as to the Lord and not unto men; and this enabled her to rise above the difficulties of her position, and led her on, step by step, to exemplify to others the truth of those forcible, but too often disregarded words: *A soft answer turneth away wrath.* It also had the effect of preventing the housekeeper's sharp sayings from producing too permanent an impression upon

her mind, and made her, moreover, less anxious to secure the approval of her fellow-creatures than that of her Master in Heaven.

Unfortunately for the peace of the house, it happened that the servant whom Crossley had engaged to fill Mary's place was a bold, determined young woman, who prided herself upon her ability and independence, and took every opportunity of proclaiming her own views and opinions, instead of meekly submitting to be guided by those of others. She was not in the main an ill-tempered girl, and under judicious management might have developed some pleasing traits of character; but she hated being trampled upon, and could not refrain from *answering again*, when listening to the angry invectives which were so frequently and so indiscriminately lavished upon her by her severe and somewhat despotic superintendent.

The more Crossley scolded and harangued, the more did her headstrong opponent rebel; and when Mary tried to soften matters between them, it usually ended in the tables being turned upon herself, Crossley accusing her of impertinence in venturing to interfere

in that which did not concern her, while the contumacious housemaid indignantly rejected her kindly-meant advice, assuring her that she was quite able to hold her own without receiving counsel or assistance from any one.

These disturbances were neither confined to time nor place. Nevertheless it almost seemed as if both the disputants shrunk, by mutual consent, from commencing a quarrel when in Lily's presence.

Perhaps they were deterred by the remembrance of certain earnest questioning looks with which she had regarded them, when she chanced to come suddenly upon them in the midst of some of their stormy discussions; or perhaps they instinctively felt that nothing but an atmosphere of harmony and peace should surround this simple, guileless child, whose own heart was filled to overflowing with universal love and sympathy.

On one occasion, however, after Lily had been prosecuting a fruitless search for her errant tabby-cat, whom she had not seen for several days, she flew away to the kitchen to inquire whether the missing favourite had

taken refuge there. The door was partially open, but no sooner did she slip inside than she stopped short, utterly appalled by the torrents of angry words which fell upon her astonished ear.

Crossley, Mary, and the housemaid were all there—the former wrathful and perturbed, the latter erect and defiant, while poor Mary stood by with quivering lips and a flushed face (caused no doubt by some Parthian shaft launched at her by the incensed housekeeper), vainly endeavouring to conceal the fact of her being in tears from her two quarrelsome companions.

For a minute or two Lily remained silent and spell-bound, gazing about her in manifest bewilderment. Then she darted forward, and demanded, in a concerned, reproachful voice—"What have you been doing to my Mary?"

"Doing!" repeated Crossley, giving a start on finding herself thus abruptly accosted by one of whose presence she had not been previously aware; "nothing at all; but if she *will* persist in meddling in matters which she does not in the least understand, she

must bear the consequences of her folly. As for Eliza," continued the exasperated woman,—losing sight for the nonce of Lily's tender age, and also forgetting, in her excitement, the advisability of keeping the child in ignorance of these domestic broils, —"as for Eliza," casting a withering look at the unabashed housemaid as she spoke, "there is positively no such thing as living with her!"

"You needn't be afraid that I shall wish to stay on a day after my time is up," retorted Eliza, with a toss of her saucy head.

"I am thankful to hear it," sneered Crossley; "for in all my experience of servants I never met with such a worthless piece of conceit as you are."

"And in all the places I ever lived I may safely say I never had the misfortune to be ordered about by such a spiteful old dragon as yourself!" was the insulting response.

"You hear what she says," observed Mrs. Crossley, sternly appealing to Mary, "and yet you must needs take the part of this impudent minx, and tell me——"

"*I* don't want her to take my part!"

exclaimed the independent young woman, with considerable energy. "Thank goodness! I'm well able to look out for myself."

"That's all the gratitude you get!" said Crossley, again addressing Mary in bitter, sarcastic tones; and then she went on, in much the same strain, to remind her of the various occasions on which she had been under the necessity of reproving her for this particular failing; after which, she once more returned to her attack upon Eliza, summing up all her short-comings and deficiencies with peculiar emphasis, and dwelling with irritating frequency upon such of her misdeeds as were productive of especial inconvenience to herself, ending at length by assuring her that her ideas were too elevated for her position, and that unless she could make up her mind to relinquish some of her fine-lady airs, and spend less time in arguing, and more in obeying, and devote less attention to the adornment of her person and more to the conscientious discharge of her duties, she would never succeed in obtaining the character of a good servant.

"You would scarcely believe it, my dear," added the rigorous housekeeper, smoothing her ruffled brow, and softening the harshness of her tone as she glanced at the golden-haired child, whose blue eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of unmistakable gravity, "but it actually takes her two whole hours to bedizen herself to her own satisfaction in the middle of the day, leaving *me* to do her work as best I can, with the help of the old charwoman, who is little better than no one."

"P'raps," said Lily, in a sober, hesitating little voice, "if you were just to 'go and tell him his fault,' you know, 'stead of 'busing her before everybody, she wouldn't take quite so long."

"'Go and tell him his fault!'" ejaculated the bewildered woman; "what on earth do you mean, my dear?"

"You needn't laugh, 'Liza! it's quite true! Mary read it in the Bible yesterday, and I'm sure it's a very good plan, only I don't 'xactly know if it 'plies to you, C'ossey, 'cause 'Liza isn't your brother!"

"Bless the child, what things she does

say!" muttered the housekeeper, looking somewhat disconcerted, while the spasmodic giggle with which Eliza had greeted Lily's former observation was now converted into an uncontrollable burst of laughter, and even Mary was constrained to turn her face away lest her young charge should see how much she was herself amused at this unexpected application of the words which had excited her interest on the preceding day.

"But Lily is more sorry for Mary than for 'Liza," truthfully affirmed the child, addressing Crossley after a thoughtful pause, "'cause when *you* scold 'Liza, '*Liza* scolds you,"—here Crossley directed a scowling look at the audacious housemaid;—"but my Mary doesn't do this, she only cries."

"More fool she!" remarked Eliza, in a contemptuous undertone.

"'*Sides*, Lily likes Mary;" this was added with the triumphant air of one who brings forward an unanswerable argument in support of some important proposition, "and so does ganpa."

"How do you know that your grandpa likes her?" demanded Crossley, rather shortly.

"'Cause I 'sturbed him one day when he was reading the paper, and asked him."

"And what did he say?" inquired Eliza, with a malicious twinkle in her eye.

"Oh, he just looked up and said '*tolelable*,' so I s'pose that means 'yes.' And then, you see, C'ossey, if Lily likes her 'stremely, and ganpa likes her tolelable, you shouldn't scold her."

"Don't you care for *me* at all?" asked Eliza, a touch of real feeling lingering behind the half-mocking tone in which she spoke.

"Yes, Lily likes you too," responded the child, but without any of the enthusiasm which she evinced when speaking of Mary.

"Come and give me a kiss, then," said Eliza, coaxingly.

Lily shook her head with an expression of great dubiety; but suddenly altering her mind, she crept close up to her, and whispered in her ear—"You shall have two kisses, if you will p'omise me not to be so long 'dizening yourself to-morrow as you gen'ally are."

Judging from the unnatural contortions of

Eliza's countenance, it must have cost her an immense effort to restrain herself from giving vent to another explosion of mirth; but the sweet seriousness of those soft blue eyes, lifted so earnestly and entreatingly to her own, had an almost instantaneous effect in enabling her to check the threatened outburst, and she was even led, after a momentary hesitation, to stoop down and say something which must have been equivalent to the required promise, for Lily smiled and appeared quite satisfied, seeing which, the outspoken housemaid unceremoniously seized her in her arms and well-nigh smothered her with kisses.

"You've taken far too many," was the child's only remonstrance, when she was at length released, "but I s'pose I must 'scuse that—as you're going to be so good."

"What a little darling it is, to be sure!" returned Eliza, gazing at her with unfeigned admiration, though her whole manner betrayed such manifest tokens of amusement that it seemed hopeless to expect her to refrain much longer from giving vocal ex-

pression to some of the feelings which were stirring in her mind.

The object of this mingled admiration and amusement was, however, happily unconscious of the strangely-distinct, and yet inextricably-blended sentiments with which she was at the same instant regarded by the same person; otherwise, she might have been unnecessarily puzzled and perhaps a little distressed by the apparent inconsistency of Eliza's behaviour; whereas she now concluded that the latter's too perceptible risibility proceeded from an entirely different source—being, in short, a most natural result of the resolution she had formed of surprising Crossley by the unusual celerity of her movements, when proceeding to adorn herself after her customary fashion on the ensuing day.

CHAPTER XVI.

"There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

KEBLE.

CROSSLEY wondered much how it was that, try as she would, she could not dismiss from her mind the simple words which Lily had in her unconscious innocence spoken regarding the public manner in which she was accustomed to administer her reproofs. It was a subject that had never before occasioned her a moment's reflection, and perhaps it may on this account have proved the more startling and attractive. Again and again did she revolve the matter over in her mind, but the more she thought of it the more was she bewildered by the strange

and conflicting ideas which it awakened within her.

"I declare I cannot understand it in the very least," she murmured to herself, when seated in her own comfortable sleeping-room that same night; "she said it was in the Bible, and so no doubt it is, but I cannot for an instant believe that we are expected to follow these Bible-precepts to the very letter."

"What an extraordinary child that is, to be sure," she went on, after a long pause, during which her meditations had once more turned to the scene of the morning; "sometimes she really startles me, coming out as she does with such queer sayings; I must warn Mary, however, not to read to her too much out of the Bible,"—here she glanced somewhat uneasily at her Bible and Prayer-book, which lay side by side upon the top of a remote chest of drawers,—"for she is by far too young to understand it." Then she suddenly paused as a certain sentence flashed across her memory,—a sentence which reminded her that there are things hidden from the wise and prudent,

and yet revealed unto babes; and she mentally asked herself whether she might not in this instance be mistaken in concluding that Lily was incapable of comprehending the meaning (in some degree at least) of what she heard. At this point of her reflections she slowly rose from her seat, and walked mechanically across the room until she reached the before mentioned chest of drawers. There she stopped, and laid her hand with a doubting, irresolute air upon the handsomely bound volume which, instead of being her daily guide and counsellor, the light to her path, and the very joy of her heart, had up to the present moment been only used on Sundays, and *that* more on account of the respectability of the thing, than because of any love she had for its contents, or any consciousness that she stood in need of its counsels or encouragements.

Now she took it up; and, having returned with it to her former place, she reseated herself in her easy arm-chair, and began deliberately to turn over its pages.

First of all she directed her attention to

the words which had been the subject of her meditations ever since Lily had with such quaint simplicity suggested that she should entirely alter her system, and instead of *scolding* try the effect of quiet and reasonable expostulations.

After finding the particular passage she wanted, she read it over aloud in a slow, distinct voice, though with a look of extreme mystification—"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

Then, with a perplexed shake of the head, she turned to the preceding verses, which spoke of the lost sheep; and when she had considered that for a while, she passed on to the end of the chapter, lingering almost unconsciously upon this one brief but comprehensive sentence—"Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

"It's utterly impossible, however, that any of this can apply to *me*," she exclaimed, in tones which showed that she was getting

quite angry with herself for allowing her thoughts to dwell upon such a disagreeable subject; "no one can accuse *me* of neglecting my duties, or say that I require either warnings or examples to spur me on to their proper performance! Thank goodness! *I* am no slothful or wicked servant."

And thus she went on, trying to persuade her half-awakened conscience that she had need of nothing, congratulating herself, like the blind, perverted Pharisee of old, on being "not as other men are," and forgetting in her ignorance and self-righteousness that "not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

She was just in the act of closing the Bible, when her eye inadvertently lighted upon the first verse of the chapter from which she had so lately been reading. The question therein propounded by the disciples, as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was one of undoubted interest to Crossley in her present state of mind; but as she went on to read of the child whom Jesus had set in their

midst, and the declaration He had Himself so solemnly made—"Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,"—her pride and self-gratulation received a shock, from which she would not soon recover.

Not that these words were new to her; on the contrary, she had been familiar with them almost from the days of her early childhood; but on no previous occasion had they produced the same startling impression upon her, or caused her any of that anxiety and uneasiness which she subsequently felt at the remembrance of their solemn import.

For the effect of this one salutary lesson did not (as is too frequently the case) altogether pass away, leaving her harder and more self-satisfied than before. Step by step it led her on to search the Scriptures. Little by little it taught her to look within, and regard *herself* and her own doings with less and less complacency; and although she was unconscious of being in any way changed, and those around her were unable to dis-

tinguish any noticeable alteration in her outward conduct, yet let us hope that some fruit might in after days be found to testify to the reality of the improvement which was so gradually taking place within her.

* * * * *

If Eliza imagined that Lily would be satisfied with the mere promise she had extracted from her, without taking measures to facilitate its fulfilment, she was greatly mistaken, for almost immediately after she had shut herself into her room on the ensuing day for the purpose of performing the business of her toilet, she heard a light tap at her door, and on flinging it open with no gentle hand (for she was not at all pleased with the interruption), she found a small figure standing outside, with a bewitching smile upon its sweet little face, and two tiny hands clasped exultingly together, while the merry blue eyes were dancing with suppressed excitement.

"What do you want?" demanded Eliza; some home-thrust of Crossley's had sent her into her room in anything but a good humour.

"Now didn't I 'member nicely?" exclaimed Lily, with a ringing laugh; "I *made* Mary let me come, 'cause I wanted to help you to make haste and d'ess."

"How could a little creature like you help me?" asked the housemaid, in rather a disdainful tone, though her face grew somewhat softer in its expression as she glanced at the lovely child, whose simple white frock, and long silky hair, which floated around her like burnished gold, made her look more infantile and ethereal than ever.

"I 'sure you I can do a g'eat many things," replied Lily, with much earnestness; "please let me in, and I won't 'sturb you at all."

"Well, come along, then," said the other, opening the door still wider, instead of closing it against her, as she was at first tempted to do; "but you must be very good, you know, or else you will only be in my way."

"Oh, yes! Lily will be very good," returned her young visitor, as she skipped delightedly into the apartment; then she remained for a while perfectly silent, watch-

ing Eliza's movements with an appearance of great interest, and being always ready to pick up any small article which she might in her haste let fall, and also to perform many other trifling offices, which, if not exactly a help, were certainly no hindrance to the busy housemaid. When the latter commenced to dress her hair, according to her usual elaborate fashion, she considerately proposed that Lily should occupy a comfortable nest, which she had made up for her on one corner of the large toilet table.

"I shall get on much faster if you do," she said, in answer to some objection which Lily raised to the plan; and without waiting for any further discussion, she hastily lifted her from the ground, and seated her upon the table.

"Take care you don't c'ush my f'ock," was Lily's anxious remark, as she found herself suddenly deposited upon her elevated seat, "'cause if you *do*, C'ossey will scold poor Mary."

"Why should she scold Mary for what *I* do?" inquired Eliza, in some surprise.

"She says two f'ocks a week is quite

enough for me," explained the child, in a grave, confidential tone; "and then when I get them c'ushed 'fore the p'oper time, she just scolds Mary, and Lily doesn't like that at all."

"What a tender-hearted little creature you are!" exclaimed Eliza, stooping to kiss her: "I declare I never saw such a child in all my life."

"Didn't you?" responded Lily, with artless simplicity.

"No, indeed," was the amused reply; "you are such an oddity."

"What kind of child is that?" queried Lily, after a pause of consideration.

"Oh, dear! I can't tell you," tittered Eliza, who seemed to be seized with a violent attack of coughing, which ultimately subsided into a fit of hysterical laughter. "Now, I really must make haste," she went on, as soon as she could recover her gravity; "my hair is finished, you see"—glancing approvingly at herself in the glass—"and I have very little more to do."

"Why do you wear these things?" asked the inquisitive maiden, pointing to a pair of

enormous earrings with which Eliza was at that instant bedecking herself.

"Why shouldn't *I* wear them as well as other people?"

"Mary doesn't."

"Ah, she's such a poor-spirited creature," observed Eliza, in a tone expressive of any amount of scorn; "she says servants ought to dress according to their station, and not imitate their betters—just as if ladies should wear all the pretty things, and servants the ugly ones. She thinks, I suppose, that because we don't happen to be rich or high-born, we ought to submit to *anything;* but for my part, I don't see why *we* should be browbeaten any more than others."

To all this Lily answered nothing, for the simple reason that she did not in the very least understand what Eliza was talking about; but presently the latter continued, whilst fastening her collar with a showy-looking brooch, made to correspond with the pendulous ornaments she had previously put on, "Almost everybody wears these sort of things now"—complacently touching one of

her earrings—"every *lady*, I mean," correcting herself as she thought of Mary.

"Do they?" said Lily, innocently; adding directly afterwards, in a slightly hesitating tone, "I don't b'lieve my mamma does, though."

"Nonsense!" returned the housemaid, half laughing, half annoyed; "it's next to impossible that a tiny chit like you can recollect anything that *she* did."

"'Deed, Lily 'members her own mamma quite well!" earnestly returned the child; "and she saw her the other day."

"Saw her!" echoed the other in the greatest astonishment; "where?"

"In the colledor" (Lily probably meant the corridor, but her pronunciation and grammar were for the present far from perfect); "and she looked so nice and p'itty."

"But how came she there?" pursued Eliza, more and more bewildered; "and what was she doing?"

"Just hanging up with the other ladies and gentlemens," was the concise reply.

A prolonged "Oh!" testified to the reaction which Eliza experienced on finding the

supposed *person* suddenly transformed into a picture; but without the slightest idea of the diminished interest with which her story was now listened to, Lily continued excitedly, "And when I saw her I ran away to tell ganpa."

"Well?" suggested the housemaid, who gathered from her countenance that she had met with some disappointment.

"I couldn't find ganpa for a good while, 'cause he was out; and when he came"—here the little lips began to quiver, and the soft eyes to fill with tears—"Lily took him to see it, and it wasn't there at all!"

"Dear me! that was very strange," soothingly remarked her companion; "what *could* have become of it?"

Lily shook her head despondingly as she proceeded in a half choking voice, "'Stead of my own p'itty mamma, there was an ugly old woman with a big cap on—like one of C'ossey's nightcaps!"

Eliza could not restrain a smile at this apt comparison, but it was evidently no laughing matter to Lily; for she still looked very

much discomposed at the remembrance of her disappointment.

"And what did your grandpa say, dear?" was the housemaid's next kind inquiry.

"Oh, he just called C'ossey, and asked her what it meant; and she said p'raps Lily was 'staken."

"Did you tell Mrs. Crossley anything about the picture *before* your grandpa went to see it?" demanded Eliza, after pondering the matter over in her mind for the space of a few seconds.

"Yes, Lily begged her to go and see it."

"Ha! and did she go?"

"No, she told me to wait till ganpa came home, and then she would come too."

"I see! I see!" mused the astute housemaid; "I always suspected that Mrs. Crossley knew more than she chose to own, and now I feel sure of it!"

Having given utterance to this brief soliloquy, she turned to Lily and said, "I am quite dressed now, dear, so I suppose we had better be going, or else the old termagant will be coming to look after me."

And with a satisfied laugh at her own wit, she placed the child gently upon the floor, and led her out of the room and down the stairs, comforting her meanwhile by telling her not to trouble about the picture, as she would no doubt see it again upon some future occasion.

Crossley was seated in her own peculiar sanctum—a small, but well-furnished parlour, separated from the spacious kitchen by a glass door, which now stood wide open—looking over her accounts.

"Here's 'Liza, all d'essed," exclaimed Lily, stepping just inside the open door, and pointing triumphantly to her companion; "hasn't she been good, C'ossey?"

"Hum!" rejoined the precise housekeeper, as she threw one of her eagle glances at the old-fashioned timepiece which measured the hours upon an equally old-fashioned bracket exactly in front of her; "she certainly has been quicker than usual. I only wish that it might be the beginning of better things! but I suppose this would be too much to expect from so very independent and consequential a person, who

prides herself on following no one's opinion but her own!"

The bitter sarcasm of Crossley's tone added greatly to the force of her words; and it was scarcely surprising that Eliza should have felt extremely annoyed at hearing herself thus abused, at the very moment when she had really taken a step in the right direction.

Her cheeks grew scarlet with suppressed passion, and an angry, defiant light shot from her eyes, while a fierce retort trembled on her tongue, and would doubtless have found voice but for an indefinable sensation which stole over her as she caught sight of the soft, compassionate gaze with which Lily was regarding her, and became instinctively aware that it would vex and distress *her* to listen to the resentful language she had been about to use.

She contented herself, therefore, with flashing an indignant glance at the fault-finding housekeeper, and then walked away to the other end of the kitchen, murmuring in an audible voice as she began to set about her usual employments, "I declare I don't

know what has come over me—I feel as meek as a mouse! It must be *that child* who has bewitched me with her innocent little ways, for it positively makes me almost good to look at her!"

"I have felt that many a time," said a quiet voice behind her.

"You?" cried Eliza, turning quickly round, and finding herself face to face with the good-natured nurse, who had come in search of her young charge; "why, I thought you were always good and contented."

There was a slight sneer in her voice as she spoke thus, for in her heart she despised Mary for not standing up for her own rights, &c., and she was also inclined to blame her for having (as she termed it) spoilt Crossley by allowing her to domineer over her, without making any resistance.

"You were greatly mistaken, then," said Mary, taking no notice of the sneer; "I am very far from being good, and as to contentment—well, I have not much to complain of *now*, but before *she* came"—pointing to the adjoining room, where Lily was playing

with the cat, who had returned from its wanderings the previous night—"I was often absolutely miserable."

"And no wonder!" observed Eliza, parenthetically.

"*You* call the house dull now," proceeded Mary, with a smile; "but what would you have thought of it *then*, with all the shutters closed, and not a soul to speak to except Mrs. Crossley? I assure you it was as different as darkness is from light."

"Well, I still think you acted most foolishly," affirmed Eliza, who could not resist the temptation of again recurring to the old grievance, "in so coolly allowing her"—alluding, of course, to the housekeeper—"to make such a complete slave of you. Why on earth should *you* be any more afraid of her than I am?"

"I am not exactly *afraid* of her," began Mary, slowly and hesitatingly.

"For the fact is," laughingly resumed her companion, "that if it came to blows you would be more than a match for her, I suspect; *provided*"—this clause was inserted with an air of mock gravity, though a mis-

chievous smile hovered about the daring lips—"you could muster courage to hit hard enough!"

"You do not understand me, Eliza," explained Mary, in a gentle, serious tone, which contrasted strangely with the other's levity; "it isn't because I am afraid of Crossley that I do my best to give her satisfaction."

"Indeed!" rejoined Eliza, in accents of astonishment; "what other reason have you got, pray?"

"We are told, you know, that it is the duty of servants to be obedient, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward——"

"Whatever are you talking about?" sharply interrupted Eliza, staring at her in open-eyed amazement.

"If we would be faithful followers of the Lord Jesus," continued Mary, dropping her voice almost to a whisper, while a slight flush appeared on her cheeks, "we must be ready to bear our daily cross, and tread in His footsteps. 'When He was reviled He reviled not again, and when He suffered He

threatened not;' and He bids us go and do likewise!"

"That's a thing I never *can* do," said the housemaid, with a little shrug.

"Unless I am mistaken you have begun the *not answering again* system already," was the smiling rejoinder.

"Ah! that was only to please Miss Lily," said Eliza, looking half ashamed at being obliged to make the admission.

"Perhaps the time may come when you will do it from a different motive!" suggested Mary, as she moved away in obedience to an imperious summons which called for her immediate presence in the housekeeper's room.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Rise, for the day is passing,
And you lie dreaming on;
The others have buckled their armour,
And forth to the fight are gone.
A place in the ranks awaits you,
Each man has some part to play;
The past and the present are nothing
In the face of the stern to-day."

A. PROCTER.

ONE Sunday afternoon Lily was restless and ill at ease. She had, in fact, nothing to do; consequently, the active little body, and the not less active mind, were both suffering from one of the most tiresome of all complaints—*ennui*.

Her doll, together with the rest of her playthings, had been put away as usual before she retired to rest the previous evening. Mary was at church. Even the lively housemaid was out, probably visiting her friends; while Crossley invariably passed the afternoons in her own room, lying down, after the fatigue of the morning ser-

vice. Only Mr. Faversham remained to take care of the energetic little creature, who could not sit still for two moments together; and *he*, after making a few spasmodic efforts to amuse her, gave up the attempt in despair, and, leaning back in his arm-chair, he relapsed into a silent, reflective mood, from which he gradually drifted into a state of dreamy unconsciousness, such as is so frequently the precursor of profound repose.

For some time he continued undisturbed. Then Lily came over to him from a distant window, where she had been trying to entertain herself by observing the clouds, which floated about the grey sky in a manner ominously suggestive of a gathering storm, and, sitting down upon a stool close to his feet, she leant against the side of his chair, murmuring plaintively, "Oh, dear—Lily's so tired!"

"What is it?" asked Mr. Faversham, rousing himself in a moment as he heard her soft voice, and felt the touch of her tiny hand upon his knee. "Can I do anything for you?"—and he gazed into the little

upturned face with the tenderest sympathy.

"Lily doesn't know *what* to do," replied the child, giving a weary sigh.

"Perhaps if I were to tell you a story it might amuse you," proposed Mr. Faversham, after a pause of consideration.

"Oh, yes,—that *will* be nice!" returned Lily, with renewed animation.

"What shall it be about?" said Mr. Faversham, ponderingly,—"'The Diamond-crowned Princess?'" a fairy-tale which he knew she delighted in.

"No, not that," was the unexpected answer; "'cause it's Sunday, and Mary makes me put away my Fairy Book,"—a richly-bound volume which Mr. Faversham had himself purchased for her, full of the most extraordinary and improbable stories; and illustrated by hundreds of grotesque engravings so intensely provocative of mirth that Lily could never look at them without experiencing a very decided tendency to go into convulsions of laughter.

"Why does she do that?" inquired the gentleman, with a puzzled air.

"'Cause it's Sunday!" repeated Lily, opening her eyes in the greatest astonishment at the question—

"'And we must neither work nor play
'Cause it is the Sabbath-day,'—

you know," she added, putting her small hands together, as if she was saying over some important lesson, and smiling gleefully when she found that she remembered it so well.

"Oh, I see," assented Mr. Faversham, a glimmering of the truth beginning to dawn upon him. Then he plunged into another train of reflection, which Lily interrupted at length by saying, "'Spose you tell me 'bout the good man who *would* p'ay."

"Who was that?" asked her companion, absently.

"Lily forgets his name, but he was very good, and he would p'ay, and the naughty, cruel men put him in with the lions," was the lucid explanation.

"Do you mean Daniel?" inquired the old gentleman, after ransacking his brains to discover whom she alluded to.

"Yes," cried Lily, in a voice of delight; "now tell me all 'bout him."

Which Mr. Faversham essayed to do, but although he searched his memory in hopes of being able to recal the principal facts, at least, of this remarkable history, he found to his amazement that the story was better known to his companion than to himself.

"Now Lily will go and get the g'eat Bible," observed the child, suddenly jumping up from her seat, "and then we can look at him sitting with the lions; only ganpa must come too," she continued *naïvely*, "'cause these little hands"—looking down upon them with an air of most bewitching simplicity—"couldn't carry it."

At this plainly expressed intimation of her wishes, Mr. Faversham rose unhesitatingly from his seat, and followed her into the dining-room.

A curious smile lighted up his face when he first caught sight of the immense Bible which she had pronounced her inability to carry, for it was quite as much as himself could do to transfer it from one room to another.

With an irrepressible sigh he opened it, and began to turn over its pages, for the purpose of showing Lily the picture she wanted.

Many and painful were the associations connected with this old, old Bible. These very pictures which afforded Lily such interest had been gazed at and admired, and pondered over by himself when a child, and since then his own children had in like manner derived the greatest pleasure from their study. In spite of its age, it had the appearance of having been well and carefully preserved. Perhaps this may be owing to the respectful treatment it had received on account of its being so rare and valuable a copy, or else because the unusual strength and solidity of its own binding—with its durable ivory covers, broad gold rims, and massive clasps of the same precious metal—rendered it less liable to wear out than it might otherwise have been.

Lily's questions, regarding Daniel's reasons for acting in the way he did, proved so excessively bewildering to Mr. Faversham, that he was driven at last to the necessity

of applying to the Sacred Volume itself for information on the subject, and when he found that she was quite satisfied with the account given by the inspired writer without any comments of his own, he resolved on pursuing the same plan in the event of her calling his attention to such of the other pictures as might strike her childish fancy.

From henceforth this practice was regularly continued on Sunday afternoons, until there came one memorable Sabbath, when Lily startled him by suddenly asking, "Why he never went to church?"

Ah! why did he not go?

Was it because he did not believe in the existence of a God? *No;* he felt that amid all his darkness and rebelliousness, his murmurings and repinings, his mistrust and ingratitude, he had never once ceased to hold fast his belief in a Supreme Being.

Why, then, did he refuse to worship Him?

And as this question flashed into his mind, so in like manner did the answer come back to him, swiftly and convincingly.

Because he believed in a God of judg-

ment, but not a God of mercy—One whom he could fear, but not love!

Then he asked himself how it was that he should feel thus? Was it because God had afflicted him? and if so, could he be *quite certain* that these very afflictions were not, after all, sent him rather in kindness than in wrath?

True, he had been bereft of much that made life bright and pleasant; but had nothing been left him?

Mr. Faversham winced under these and many other similar reflections, and tried to banish the subject from his mind.

He stammered out some incoherent reply to Lily's artless inquiry, and then turned with a gravely-shadowed countenance, and firmly-compressed lips, to see what particular picture she had selected for him to explain.

It was the touching story of the Prodigal; and the graphic illustrations which accompanied the heart-stirring words brought every scene most vividly before the imagination.

This series of pictures consisted of:—

1st. The happy home, where all was peace and plenty, contentment and security, love and harmony.

2nd. The same home, after it had been invaded by the serpent; when peevishness and discontent began to mark the conduct of the younger son, and he makes the unreasonable demand, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*

3rd. The prodigal as he sets forth on his journey, exulting in his newly-acquired liberty, and the worldly riches with which he is laden, and deaf to the entreaties of his father, who gazes wistfully after him, and bids him beware lest in gaining the world he should lose his own soul!

4th. The prodigal in *prosperity*, presiding at the festive board, surrounded by false friends and hollow-hearted sycophants, *wasting his substance with riotous living.*

5th. The prodigal in *adversity;* no longer in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, but an impoverished, disappointed man, deserted by his fair-weather friends, desolate and afflicted.—*He began to be in want.*

6th. His new occupation.—*Feeding swine.*

7th. His extreme hunger.—*And no man gave unto him.*

8th. *The awakening.* While in the very midst of his poverty and distress, when hope seemed dead within him, and nothing remained for him to look forward to, save a painful and lingering death, he suddenly *came to himself.*

9th. *The resolve.* An expression of determination upon the emaciated countenance; bright sparkle in the tear-dimmed eyes; a new-born smile upon the pallid lips; and the swine-herd leaves his swine; the prodigal repents him of his sins; the long-lost wanderer prepares to return to his father's house!

10th. *The homeward journey.* Still in rags, still hungry, yet peaceful, hopeful, almost happy!

11th. *The prodigal's welcome.* No reproaches; no upbraiding; no threatening; no punishment! Only the father's kiss upon his neck; the best robe put on in place of the discarded rags; the ring upon his trembling hand, the shoes upon his weary

feet; the fatted calf killed; the resurrection feast got ready; and, to crown all, the benediction words pronounced over him by his offended but forgiving father—"THIS MY SON WAS DEAD AND IS ALIVE AGAIN: HE WAS LOST AND IS FOUND."

And while Mr. Faversham studies these thrilling Bible scenes, and tries, with a calm, grave face, to elucidate their meaning to the eager listener at his side, the scales are falling from his own long-blinded eyes; the cloud of thick darkness which had for so many years encompassed him is hastily driven asunder, dissipated by the glorious rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and he *sees God*—not as a God who loves to smite, but one who loves to save; and in the language of the prodigal his heart cries out, "I too will arise and go to my Father, for I too have sinned and done very wickedly."

And when the next Sunday came, and Lily ran to him with a pleading look, and putting her two little palms together said entreatingly, "Please, ganpa, may Lily go to church this afternoon with Mary? she

would like it *so* much! Only Mary won't take me unless you say I may go," he answered, "Yes, dear, you shall go if you wish it; but not with Mary,—I will take you myself!"

"Oh, how nice!" cried the child, standing on tiptoe, to give him a kiss as he sat in his chair; and then she hurried back to the nursery to inform Mary of the result of her petition.

They were rather late in entering the church. The bells had stopped ringing; the congregation were all assembled; and the clergyman was just stepping into the reading-desk, when, amid the low tones of the organ, Mr. Faversham, leading his young companion by the hand, walked slowly and steadily up the aisle, looking neither to the right nor left, until he reached a large square pew near the pulpit, which the beadle of the parish, who acted also in the capacity of pew-opener, hastened forward to throw open for him (to the no little discomfiture of three prim-looking elderly ladies, whom he had been marshalling about the church in search of an empty seat, but

whom he unceremoniously left to take care of themselves), directly his astonished gaze fell upon the not-to-be-mistaken couple who thus for the first time entered the house of God together.

Such a quiver of emotion thrilled through Mr. Faversham's heart as the last faint notes of the organ died away, and the introductory words of the service were spoken by a voice which penetrated to every corner of the well-filled church—

"Oh, Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."

"I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

It was as much as he could do to maintain his usual dignified and composed bearing as he listened to the self-same words which he had been pondering over all the week—*now* uttered by the lips of another; and it required some little effort for him to rouse himself to the task of finding Lily's

places for her in a large Prayer-book which she had seized upon on first entering the pew, and now handed to him from time to time with an air of great anxiety, as if she considered it most essential to the satisfactory progression of the service that she should, notwithstanding her inability to read, be at any rate sure of having the book open in the proper place.

On the whole, she behaved remarkably well. Only once during a pause in the singing did she disturb the congregation by saying in a very audible voice — "Ganpa, can't Lily stand up somewhere? she doesn't see anything at all, 'cept that thing up there"—meaning the empty oak pulpit which towered above them.

A half-suppressed titter came from the occupant of a neighbouring pew, while several heads were lowered and several pocket-handkerchiefs were brought into requisition at the unlooked-for sound of this stranger-child's voice, of whose lovely countenance many had been striving, though ineffectually, to obtain a glimpse; but no smile crossed Mr. Faversham's face.

Without knowing it, he had taken up his position exactly opposite a plain white marble tablet, on which was recorded in words few and simple the double loss he had sustained by the sudden removal of his wife and son. Though this tablet had been put up by his own orders, yet he had never before found courage to look at it; and even now he could not help giving a start as he found that his eyes were unconsciously lingering upon the old familiar names, and remembered with a sudden pang that the last occasion on which he had worshipped within those walls *they* also had been of the company!

Lily's plaintive tones arrested him, and he turned round and regarded her with a half puzzled expression, which was, however, instantly exchanged for one of grave concern, as he comprehended at a glance the state of things, and mentally blamed himself for not having anticipated her request. First he placed her upon one of the tallest hassocks he could find, but observing that even then her head did not

reach the top of the pew, he raised her to a still more elevated position, by standing her upon the seat itself, from whence she looked around her with great satisfaction, and did not again do or say anything calculated in the smallest degree to excite amusement.

"I hope you found the pew comfortable, Squire," said the officious beadle, as they were leaving it at the end of the service; "I assure you, sir, I always kept it quite private,"—waxing confidential as he saw that Mr. Faversham did not repulse him,—"and never allowed any one to sit in it—except, perhaps, on some special occasion I may have let one or two of the quality in; for though it's so many years since you were here yourself, yet the Hall pew *is* the Hall pew, whether it's used or not."

To this self-evident assertion, Mr. Faversham subscribed by a slight bend of the head; and as soon as the loquacious pew-opener had seen them fairly off, he went to waylay Mr. Singleton—the clergyman—on his way out from the vestry, and inform him

that in the course of his whole life he had never met with a man so greatly altered for the better as the Squire was.

"And I do believe, sir," he continued, energetically, "it's all owing to that extraordinary child, who looks like an angel in disguise, if I may say so with due reverence."

Mr. Singleton smiled.

"I have seen many such," he remarked, musingly; "not alone in the mansions of the rich, but also in the cottages of the poor. The worst of it is, Nelson"—here he tapped his companion lightly on the shoulder, and gazed kindly but seriously into his face—"these angels are not always appreciated as they ought to be."

And Nelson hung his head, and seemed abashed, for he was the husband of the pleasant-faced woman whom we noticed looking after Lily as she made her first appearance in the village street; and it was well known that, however much he might talk of angels abroad, he cared very little for them at home—being, in fact, rather apt to complain of the trouble and expense

which his increasing family caused him, though the angelic disposition of one at least of his children was sufficiently apparent to call forth the wonder and admiration of every one *except himself*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make man better be,
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall at last a log, dry, bald and sear.
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May."

BEN JONSON.

"FROM what we have just seen, my love, it strikes me that your interference will not be much longer required," observed Mr. Singleton, as he joined his wife, who had been waiting for him in the pretty churchyard outside.

"It never *had* been required," she answered with a smile, "although I must confess that when Mrs. Hamilton first confided her plan to me I felt excessively disinclined to undertake the charge — it appeared such a risk!"

"Now that everything has prospered, however, I suppose we may admit that it was worth the risk?" pursued Mr. Singleton, in an inquiring tone.

"It was, indeed!" returned the lady, with evident sincerity; "but at the time it seemed most preposterous to imagine that that terrible old man would tolerate the presence of a strange child in his house even for the space of a single hour!"

"Just look at them," said her husband as they emerged into the open road, and he pointed to two figures slowly saundering along within Mr. Faversham's own grounds, which extended to the very gates of the churchyard; "how happy they both seem."

"Yes; the old man's eye lights up whenever it rests upon her sweet face; and as for the child herself, it is quite easy to see that she loves him with all her heart. I told Crossley long ago that she must be sure and apply to me in case the little darling should be in want of anything in the way of clothes or money, but she says Mr. Faversham has given her the strictest orders to see that she is provided with everything that befits a child in his own station; and as whatever tends to make him more open-hearted must of

necessity produce a most beneficial effect upon his own disposition, I have not thought it advisable to check his liberality."

"Quite right!" said Mr. Singleton, approvingly; "the more he spends upon *her* the better it will be for himself — it will render him far less narrow-minded and selfish than he has hitherto been, and will also lead him to prize her more than would otherwise be the case, and take a greater personal interest in her welfare."

"Don't you think you might venture to call upon him now that he has made his appearance at church?" suggested the lady after a pause; "it would perhaps encourage him to persevere——"

Mr. Singleton shook his head as he answered, in a quick, decided tone — "I should probably do more harm than good were I to see him in his present unsettled state of mind. His coming here this afternoon was, I strongly suspect, simply to gratify some whim of his little companion, and it would be placing both him and myself in a wrong position were I to pre-

tend to understand the matter in a different light."

"I hope, however, you are mistaken in concluding that this was his sole motive," exclaimed the lady; "for, unless my eyes deceived me, he had another and better reason for coming to church to-day."

Mr. Singleton gazed wonderingly at her, but said nothing, and she continued—"His countenance looked strangely softened, and I fancied I could detect signs of no ordinary emotion upon it. During some part of the service, indeed, his agitation was excessive, and several times he seemed on the point of breaking down altogether."

"Is it possible!" ejaculated the clergyman, in unmitigated surprise. Then he added, in a more hopeful tone—"Well, my dear, I trust your surmises may prove correct; and if so, it will be a cause of rejoicing to many besides ourselves."

Mrs. Singleton assented; after which they walked on in silence, until they found themselves standing in the middle of their own lawn, from whence they could obtain a glimpse of several happy little faces smiling

down upon them, from one of the upper windows of the pleasantly-situated Vicarage.

This pretty sight did not, on the present occasion, call forth an answering smile from Mrs. Singleton. She appeared unusually grave as she turned to her husband, and said, feelingly, though with some abruptness of manner, "I cannot help thinking that it must be very bad for poor little Lily to have no society except that of Mr. Faversham and the servants at the Hall. I often wish we could get her down here sometimes; it would be such a change for her to have a game of play with our children."

"I dare say it would," returned Mr. Singleton, preparing to go indoors; "but you must not expect to do everything at once—by-and-by, perhaps, we may be able to manage it. In the meantime we will be patient, and hope for the best."

And, having uttered these words of encouragement, he shut himself into his study; while Mrs. Singleton proceeded to divest herself of her walking attire, pondering over what she had seen that afternoon, and wondering whether she could not contrive some

plan by which Mr. Faversham might be made to comprehend the advantages which would accrue to his young charge were she permitted to join in the childish sports and amusements of others of her own age, instead of being entirely restricted to the companionship of those who were in every way so utterly dissimilar to herself.

The kind-hearted lady would have been very much astonished had any one told her that before another twenty-four hours should have expired two of her children would, without any contrivance on her part, be brought into familiar intercourse not only with Lily, but also with Mr. Faversham himself.

Yet so it was, and this is how it happened. Old Peggy Morison had just recovered from an unusually severe attack of rheumatism, and on the morning in question Lily went with Mr. Faversham to pay her a visit. After remaining with her some time they walked through the neatly-kept garden at the back of the lodge, for the purpose of looking at Peggy's roses (of which the old woman was remarkably proud), and then, in-

stead of retracing their steps and entering the open road through the large entrance gates, they made use of a small wicket which led them into a narrow and somewhat winding lane, at the end of which they encountered two fair-haired, blue-eyed children — evidently brother and sister—the boy being mounted on a black, the girl on a white pony. Both were looking eagerly down the lane, as if they felt half inclined, yet half afraid, to venture through it. When they saw Mr. Faversham they consulted together in low tones, glancing at him meanwhile with an expression of timid inquiry; but they could not apparently summon up sufficient courage to address him, and would probably have turned their ponies' heads in a contrary direction, and gone away without obtaining the information they required, but for a sudden gust of wind which unceremoniously lifted the little girl's hat from her head, and after playing with it for a minute or two, sighingly deposited it at Mr. Faversham's feet.

He smiled as he stooped to recover it, and before the boy could do more than

alight from his pony with the intention of securing it himself, his sister was blushingly receiving it from the hands of the stern-looking old gentleman, whose face, however, was anything but stern as he performed this trifling act of civility, and listened to the shyly-uttered words of thanks which she essayed to offer him while nervously endeavouring to tie the hat more firmly under her chin. Her brother's thanks were rendered with far less shyness, for he was naturally of a very frank and fearless disposition, and now that the ice was broken he had no hesitation whatever in supplementing his sister's not particularly intelligible sentence by a few polite words of his own.

Mr. Faversham surveyed them both with an equal mixture of interest and surprise. He could not at first persuade himself that they were really alone; but after straining his eyes in every direction without seeing any sign of a groom or other attendant, he turned to the boy, and said, in accents of astonishment, "Is it possible that you are allowed to ride alone?"

"Oh, yes, we go out every day," he an-

swered readily, adding, as he noticed the dubious expression of the old man's face, "Mamma is not at all afraid to trust us—the ponies are so quiet, and"—drawing himself up with an air of boyish dignity—"I am quite able to take care of my little sister."

"Is your home anywhere near this?" asked Mr. Faversham, greatly amused by the protective manner which he assumed towards one who could not be much more than a year younger than himself.

"We live at the Vicarage," replied the boy. Then taking off his cap, with a gesture of irresistible ingenuousness, he continued, by way of introduction, "My name is Frederic Singleton; and this"—turning to his companion—"Amy Singleton, my sister."

"So you are the Vicar's children," observed Mr. Faversham, viewing them with even more curiosity than before. "I am very happy to make your acquaintance," and he smilingly held out his hand.

"Thank you," said Frederic, accepting the proffered civility as a matter of course, but feeling nevertheless as if only half the

ceremony was as yet completed, for he went on in a sober, business-like tone, "I know who you are, because I have often seen you at a distance; and I know who you are too," nodding his head at Lily; "everybody knows *you*."

"Do they?" was the child's simple response.

"Yes, and some of the poor people say you are a little fairy."

"Oh, but that's not *true*," cried Lily earnestly; "is it, ganpa?"

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Faversham, speaking in a tone of the utmost seriousness, though a strange smile flitted like a ray of sunshine across his countenance.

"They say it because they don't know any better," remarked Frederic, excusingly; "but *we* never thought you were a fairy, did we, Amy?"

"No," assented his sister, "I suppose not. I should think it would be very nice to be a fairy, though."

This was spoken to Lily in a half-shy aside.

"That's because you are a girl," returned

her brother, somewhat contemptuously; "*boys* wouldn't like to be fairies."

"If Lily was *yeally* a fairy," said that young lady, advancing as close as possible to the white pony, and standing on tiptoe in order to raise herself as nearly as she could to a level with the little Amy, who stooped down to listen to what she had to say—"if Lily was *yeally* a fairy, she would just take ganpa's stick and touch that stone, and it would turn into another p'itty white pony for me to *yide* on; and then I would touch that other stone, and it would be a g'eat big horse for my ganpa!"

The children laughed merrily at this, but Mr. Faversham looked grave and pre-occupied.

He had been forcibly reminded of the time when *his* two children used to ride side by side like *these* two, while *he*—a proud and happy father—often accompanied them with supreme enjoyment. Since *then* what changes had come!—one had been torn from his paternal arms, and the other he had himself driven far from him.

As he mused thus, Amy Singleton had

taken advantage of his abstraction to continue her conversation with Lily. After informing her that the white pony was named Snow, and the black one Jet, and answering sundry other eager questions regarding them, she was about to respond to her new friend's enthusiastic encomiums of her own peculiar favourite, by dismounting for the purpose of letting Lily take her place, when Mr. Faversham suddenly started out of his reverie, and hastened to put a stop to the proceeding.

"No, no, my dear," he interposed, in a voice of decision; "you must wait until Lily has grown a little older before you ask her to ride."

"Just for a minute, ganpa," pleaded the child, with sparkling eyes, and an eager, excited face.

"Well, it must be *only* a minute!" he said, his brow relaxing, and an indulgent smile coming to his lips, as he met her earnest look. And he lifted her upon the saddle, and himself guided the pony for a few yards.

Then he placed her on the ground again,

and carefully assisted Amy to her former position, saying as he did so, "I hope you and your brother will come and see your new friend at Faversham! I am sure it will give her much pleasure to show you her pets and flowers."

"Oh, yes!" cried Lily, in ecstasy, while Frederic and Amy both looked delighted at the idea, though the former remarked, in a slightly regretful tone, that he and his sister were going early the following morning to London, where they would remain for the next fortnight, on a visit to their uncle, Sir George Singleton.

"Very well, then," rejoined Mr. Faversham, who was evidently much gratified at the manner in which his invitation had been received, "as soon as the fortnight has expired I shall write to your father asking him to allow you to spend an early day with us at Faversham. Meantime," he added, with a change in his tone, and a glance that testified to his having been fully aware of the exact position in which they were placed, "I must show you the nearest way to the Vicarage—this lane would only have led you into my grounds."

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ments,"—
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Hall."
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them—they are nice!"
assumed the old man,
time. "And of course,"
it is to be presumed, for

his own information than that of his young companion, "it stands to reason that children should wish to associate with children. I wonder it never occurred to me before—I fear I have been very selfish." Here followed a half-repressed sigh. "But for the future it shall be my endeavour to consult *her* good rather than my own personal convenience or inclination."

An expression of unutterable tenderness took possession of his softened features as he made this resolve, and his heart glowed with intense satisfaction.

It had cost him no inconsiderable effort to cast aside thus suddenly, and of his own free will (though only as yet in anticipation), those habits of unsocial reserve which had been wont to characterise his dealings with the outer world; but he felt that, for Lily's sake, the sacrifice must be made; and now that he had found courage to ask himself what he *ought*, rather than what he *wished* to do, there could be little fear of his ever again relapsing into that morbid condition from which he had been so providentially rescued.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Submission to the will of God, with experience of His support, in pain, sickness, and affliction, is a more joyous and happy state than any degree of health or worldly wisdom."

ADAM.

FOR a day or two after the meeting adverted to in my last chapter, Mr. Faversham and Lily thought and talked much of their expected visitors, but, long before the specified fortnight had expired, the Squire had well-nigh forgotten that such children as Frederic and Amy Singleton were even in existence.

For Lily was ill—laid up with what at first sight seemed merely a cold, but soon developed into an unusually severe form of that inevitable children's malady, measles! and in spite of the care and attention which were lavished on her from every inmate of the Hall, the more serious symptoms went on steadily increasing, until little hope was entertained of her ultimate recovery.

During the earlier stages of her illness

she would lie restlessly tossing about upon her bed, looking at Mr. Faversham with a melancholy smile, alternately informing him, in a sad, piteous voice, that "she was not at all well," and asking him whether he could cure her; but, as the disease progressed, she became, for the most part, unconscious; and when the anxious old man bent over her from time to time, with an expression of concentrated uneasiness upon his pallid countenance, he could hear her softly murmuring—*now* a half-remembered baby-rhyme that she had probably learnt at her mother's knee, *now* some short text which Mary had taught her, strangely intermingled with her favourite fairy tales, and an occasional mention of his own name, together with those of her feathered pets, and even her much-loved flowers. Yet, over and above all, came a startling and oft-repeated cry for her mamma, which neither Mary, nor Crossley, nor the energetic housemaid could succeed in soothing; and Mr. Faversham, who would willingly have cut off his right hand rather than that his darling should have one wish ungratified, found himself, under the circum-

stances, totally helpless. He could only clasp his hands in impotent grief, and press his thin lips firmly together while listening to that unconscious moaning cry for one whom he had hoped was long ago forgotten. How eagerly he scanned the doctor's face whenever he made his appearance in the sick room! With what trembling earnestness he questioned and cross-questioned him in regard to Lily's condition! And when the blunt, matter-of-fact practitioner (not Dr. Wilford—*he* had left the neighbourhood some years before) at length informed him that he had grave doubts as to the result of her illness, how peremptory he was in urging him to lose no time in securing the co-operation of some celebrated physician who might assist him in a case which had, by his own confession, proved baffling to himself. Then the poor old man tottered slowly away to the small library, feeling as if it would kill him were he to listen to any more of Lily's fitful wanderings; and throwing himself down upon a chair, he covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud in the bitterness of his spirit.

For hours he remained thus, taking no note of time—only thinking of his own great sorrow. That Lily would die he did not for a moment doubt—he had, in fact, never doubted it (so he told himself) from the very commencement of her illness. She was too good, too angel-like, to live! and the only wonder was that he should have been permitted to retain possession of her so long. He did not repine, for he felt that to have known and loved her at all was a privilege for which he could not be too grateful; still grief must have its way, and it was impossible that he should be otherwise than profoundly distressed at the idea of losing her.

Meanwhile the consulting physician had come and gone, and Lily seemed to be growing weaker and weaker, when Crossley, who had been going about the house like one distracted, wringing her hands and crying bitterly, came hurrying into the room. She looked very pale and sad, but there was an air of determination about her, which showed that she was making an effort to keep her own feelings under control.

"The doctors say," she remarked ab-

ruptly, though her tones were low and tremulous, "that this incessant moan for her mamma is doing the child harm."

"Of course it must be!" was Mr. Faversham's dejected reply; "but how can we help it? If we only knew where her own relations are, I would send for them without a moment's hesitation; but——"

"But as this is out of the question," quickly returned the housekeeper, "I have been thinking whether we might not try the experiment of asking Mrs. Singleton to come and stay with her for a while——"

"Mrs. Singleton!" repeated the gentleman, in a questioning voice; "who may she be?"

"The Vicar's wife, sir."

"I see," said Mr. Faversham, with a sudden flash of recollection; "well, what of her?"

"It was only last summer that she nursed her own children through the same complaint, sir."

"And did they recover?" asked Mr. Faversham, huskily.

"They did, sir; and I can't help fancying

that the little darling upstairs would have a better chance, if some one who has experience in these things was here, to point out what ought to be done. Besides, it is quite possible," continued Crossley, impassively, "that while the poor child remains in this half-unconscious state, she might really take Mrs. Singleton for her mamma?"

"So she might!" exclaimed Mr. Faversham with feverish anxiety; "the room is so dark and ——"

"And Mrs. Singleton is a stranger, and *a lady*!" emphasised Crossley; "the first lady, in fact, that Miss Lily has been brought in contact with since her arrival at Faversham."

"True, true," mused the Squire. "I wonder whether she would object to come?" This was spoken more to himself than Crossley.

"I am sure she would not," was the prompt reply; "indeed, she is already here."

"Here!" cried Mr. Faversham, starting to his feet.

"Yes, sir; I took the liberty of sending for her on my own account, and she is now in

the pink drawing-room, waiting to speak to you before she goes upstairs."

Without another word Mr. Faversham bent his steps thither. As he opened the door Mrs. Singleton rose from her seat, and coming forward to meet him, held out her hand, saying, in a tone of sincere sympathy, "We are all so sorry to hear of your trouble, Mr. Faversham—may I hope that you will allow me to make myself useful in the sick room?"

"You are very kind," he answered, gazing at her with an expression of melancholy interest, and feeling that Crossley had shown her good sense in selecting *her* as the most suitable person to enact the part of mother to his beautiful Lily. Not that Mrs. Singleton could be termed beautiful; but there was a nameless charm about her—something of grace in her every movement, some indescribable expression which sparkled over her finely-cut features and lighted up her mild gray eyes—inspiring both admiration and affection.

"I see I have your consent," she said, in gentle, winning tones, as she moved towards the door.

"You are very kind," again murmured Mr. Faversham, in a voice which trembled with emotion, "but I fear there is no hope!" and he turned aside to hide the agitation which he could not wholly suppress.

Mrs. Singleton said just a word or two of encouragement, and then went upstairs; and having removed her bonnet and cloak and made them over to Crossley, whom she found waiting for her in the corridor, she noiselessly passed into Lily's room and took up her station at one side of the bed, where, herself unseen, she could watch each of the little sufferer's movements.

Her practised eye soon told her that the danger had not been exaggerated. The poor child looked almost like a shadow, and Mrs. Singleton's heart sank within her as she beheld the slight fragile form, which seemed so utterly unfitted to bear up against any kind of sickness or pain.

For a long time Lily was unconscious of her presence; but when the next restless fit came on, and the child began again to ask for her mamma, Mrs. Singleton stooped tenderly over her, and after bathing the

heated forehead with some cooling essence which she had found of much use when her own children were suffering from the same complaint, she kissed the parched lips, and murmured a few loving words in those low sweet tones which fall so soothingly upon the ears of the sick.

And as Lily heard her voice and felt the soft touch of her hand she smiled, saying in a languid, half-dreamy voice, "That's so nice; please do it again."

Mrs. Singleton threw some of the essence upon a fine pocket-handkerchief and proceeded a second time to bathe the burning brow and sponge the tiny hands which clung so tenaciously to her own; and after the lapse of a very few minutes she was as much relieved as astonished to find that the child was fallen asleep.

She was still sleeping when the doctor stole in to look at her, closely followed by Mr. Faversham, whose pale face displayed tokens of mingled surprise and satisfaction when he marked the reposeful expression of her countenance, and saw how closely she had grasped Mrs. Singleton's hand.

No one spoke, so fearful were they of disturbing Lily's slumbers; but the doctor exchanged a look and a bow with Mrs. Singleton, nodded his head approvingly as he pointed to the bed, and finally withdrew as quietly as he had entered.

That same evening the Vicar made his appearance at the Hall for the purpose of ascertaining from his wife exactly how Lily was; but as Mrs. Singleton could not at that moment leave her charge without running the risk of causing her considerable excitement, she requested Mr. Faversham to explain to him how she was situated, and at the same time inform him of her intention to remain where she was until she should see some change for the better in the poor child's condition.

Perhaps, also, she was glad of the opportunity of bringing the Squire into personal intercourse with her husband; and if so, she had no reason to be dissatisfied with the result, for before the interview was ended Mr. Faversham felt that it had done him good!

The next day, and the next, Mr. Single-

ton repeated his visit, until the old man began to look forward to his coming with unmistakable pleasure.

This pleasure was fully shared by Mr. Singleton, who had been greatly struck by the Squire's altered manner, and the strange humility with which he alluded to himself, and everything that had befallen him. He always shook his head when Mr. Singleton suggested that it might yet be God's will to spare Lily's life.

"No, no," he would say, in a tone of deep feeling, "I cannot even ask it! my past trials have been borne with such sinful rebelliousness, that if the Almighty should see fit to afflict me still further, it will be only what I deserve and expect."

And as Mr. Singleton listened to his self-upbraidings, and saw the look of mingled grief and humility which rested on his care-worn countenance, he knew that if God were indeed to consider it necessary to remove this object of his affection he would meekly and submissively endure the stroke, kiss the rod which had inflicted it, and, amidst the weakness of human suffering, and the bitter-

ness of human sorrow, exclaim, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

But Lily did not die; although she hovered so long over the brink of the grave that even Mrs. Singleton, whose hopeful disposition inclined her to take the brightest view of the case, began to despair of her recovery. Slowly and imperceptibly the ebbing tide came back to the small fragile frame; vigour returned to the weary limbs, and colour to the faded cheeks; and the flickering flame, which had been so nearly exhausted, began gradually to grow stronger and brighter, until the fascinating little creature was running about, as active and gay-hearted as ever!

For some time she remained under the impression that the lady who spoke so softly to her, and nursed her with such devoted tenderness, could be none other than her long-lost mother; but when the more serious part of her illness was over, and she was able to notice all that went on around her, she soon found out her mistake.

"So you are not mamma," she said to Mrs. Singleton in a tone of disappointment, after watching her intently one day.

"No," replied the lady, quickly; "but you must love me all the same."

"Must I?" said Lily, somewhat dubiously.

"Yes; because I am mamma's friend!"

"Oh," exclaimed the child, looking more satisfied, "I didn't know that. Please, mamma's friend," she added, presently, "when will mamma come herself?"

"Not just yet, dear," returned Mrs. Singleton, in a soft, soothing voice; "but she has sent me instead, you see, and she hopes you will be very happy and contented with your grandpapa until she sees you again."

This was quite enough for Lily. She put up her little lips for a kiss, and lay back upon her pillow with an air of placid resignation. She never more complained of her mother's absence, but became each day fonder of Mrs. Singleton, whom she would follow with her eyes all over the room and address by the title of "mamma's friend." Sometimes the lady feared lest the constant repetition of this name should arouse Mr. Faversham's suspicion, and lead to his asking questions which she might

not find it convenient to answer; but he fancied that it simply arose from the circumstance of her having for a while acted as the representative of Lily's mamma, and thereby become associated with her in the child's mind; and he only smiled when he heard the sweet lisping voice eagerly recounting the wonderful sayings and doings of mamma's friend! who during the wearisome period of convalescence was most successful in inventing various kinds of amusements for beguiling the tedium and monotony of the sick-room.

The old man's joy on seeing his darling thus restored to him from the very gates of death was inexpressible.

At first he could scarcely realise the truth, so thoroughly persuaded had he been in his own mind that she would be taken from him; and it was not until Lily was well enough to be carried from her bed to the sofa that he permitted himself to cast aside his doubts and fears, and enter fully into the delightful prospect which was opening up before him of being still entrusted with the charge of one who had grown so dear to his desolate heart.

After this there was a great improvement in Mr. Faversham's general manner. He became less cold, and reserved, and unbending in his intercourse with others, and began to take a kindly interest in the welfare of those whom he had previously deemed beneath his notice. No one could now accuse him of being haughty and dogmatical, harsh or overbearing;—for there was an air of courtesy and grave politeness about him, which astonished and disarmed the most prejudiced of his observers, and converted the foes which his former incivility had made into positive friends!

Even the servants benefited from this change, for Mr. Faversham's eyes were at length opened to the foolishness and inconsistency of his conduct in withdrawing himself from the society of those of his own station, and wilfully suffering the grand old mansion and fair domain, which had once been the admiration of the whole neighbourhood, to lapse into so woful a state of neglect and disrepair; and he gradually set about the somewhat difficult and delicate task of introducing certain alterations in the

internal arrangements of the household, besides taking measures for having the entire estate put under competent management.

He was prepared for considerable opposition on the part of Crossley, who would, he feared, shrink from the additional trouble and responsibility of being expected to superintend the movements of an establishment so much larger than anything to which she had of late years been accustomed; but, although she certainly did grumble a little at the anticipated changes, and sigh over the cruel fate which doomed her to enjoy neither rest nor quiet in her old age, she behaved on the whole with commendable forbearance, insomuch as she faithfully acted up to his wishes without any reference to her own personal feelings on the subject.

It may be that in her secret heart she recognised the expediency of these projected alterations, and deemed it advisable for Lily's sake—if not, indeed, on account of Mr. Faversham himself—to bring forward no serious objections to their being carried into effect.

CHAPTER XX.

"Unskilful he to fawn or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

"At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray."

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

ONE day a pleasant surprise awaited Lily.

She had been dressed as usual and carried downstairs, and placed on a couch in the pink drawing-room, from whence she could watch the movements of her feathered pets; but she was beginning to grow somewhat weary of this life of inaction, and sorely missed her kind friend Mrs. Singleton, who had been obliged to return to the Vicarage some days before.

The doctor was not altogether satisfied, he said, with the progress his patient made towards complete recovery; she still looked so pale and shadowy, and would, he feared,

remain so, as long as she was confined to the house. Fresh air and gentle exercise, this was what she wanted, and yet how could she get it, when her little tired feet refused to carry her half way across the room without making her faint and dizzy?—so weakened had she been by her late illness.

But on this particular day Mary came to her, and informed her, with a half-checked smile, and face of suppressed excitement, that Mr. Faversham was waiting to take her out with him.

"Is he?" said Lily, an eager flush springing to her colourless cheeks; then she shook her head gravely as she suddenly remembered her inability to walk, and eyed the little cashmere costume which Mary was about to put on over her white muslin frock with an air of great dubiety.

"Will you not like to go?" asked Mary, while hastily brushing back the silken hair from the pure white forehead.

"Yes, Lily would *like* it," replied the child, passively resigning herself into the hands of her attendant, "only she's af'aid she can't go far."

"Never mind that, dear," returned Mary, gazing tenderly down upon her. "I'm sure your grandpa won't let you go a step further than you like."

And having given utterance to this encouraging assurance, she took Lily up in her arms, and carried her into the hall, and across the wide vestibule, until she reached the marble steps in front of the house.

When there, Mr. Faversham came forward to meet them, and pointed with a smile to an elegant little pony carriage, with two beautiful grey ponies, which stood waiting for them on the smooth gravel below.

Lily's face of mingled astonishment, incredulity, and delight, as Mr. Faversham gently seated her inside the phaeton and then took his own place at her side, was a sight to be seen.

"Oh, how nice it is!" she cried, drawing a long breath of admiration, and leaning contentedly back among the cushions.

Mr. Faversham said nothing; but there was an expression of unwonted softness lingering about his mouth, and a gleam of pleasure shone in his eyes.

"Is ganpa going to d'ive?" asked Lily, when she saw the groom handing the reins to his master, preparatory to springing up behind them.

Mr. Faversham nodded, as the little questioner continued—"And is this ganpa's own carriage and horses?"

"No, they are not mine," answered her companion, regarding her with a look of intense fondness; "I bought them for a little girl I know."

"Did you?" responded Lily, in innocent wonderment. "She will be very glad, I s'pose."

"Yes, I hope so; she can't walk much just now, so I thought she would like to drive instead."

"That's something like me," observed Lily, opening her blue eyes very wide. "Has this little girl been ill, too?"

"Perhaps it was for you I bought them," suggested her companion, lowering his voice somewhat.

"Oh, ganpa!" she exclaimed, in breathless ecstasy, "was it *yeally* for Lily?"

"Indeed it was," replied Mr. Faversham,

with a pleasant smile; "and by-and-by, when you get a little stronger, you shall learn to ride."

"Oh, dear! that *is* nice!" was the emphatic response; but Mr. Faversham feared to excite her by dwelling on the subject too long, so after a few sober, matter-of-fact observations regarding the grey ponies, both of whom seemed deserving of the high character for docility which he had received of them before he ventured to make his purchase, he gradually directed her thoughts into another channel.

This, their first drive, was only a short one; but Lily appeared to derive so much benefit from it that Mr. Faversham began to long for the time when her increased strength would enable her to spend a considerable portion of each day in the enjoyment of this pleasant and healthful recreation.

The second occasion on which they drove out together, Mr. Faversham stopped at a place where two roads met—one leading to the village, the other past the church and Vicarage—and, turning to his young companion, said, in a slightly hesitating voice—"I

wonder if there is any one whom my little Lily would like to see?"

For a moment the child's face assumed a puzzled, inquiring look; then it lighted up with a quick sparkle of gratified surprise, and she answered gleefully, "Oh, Lily would like to see mamma's friend—*very much.*"

Without another word the ponies' heads were turned in the direction of the Vicarage. For some days past Mr. Faversham had been intending to make a ceremonious call on Mr. Singleton; but a sudden impulse had told him that the visit would be more satisfactory to all parties if Lily were to accompany him. He bethought himself also of the invitation he had given the Vicar's children previous to her illness, and considered that the present would be a favourable opportunity of renewing it, especially as Lily was now sufficiently recovered to be able to find some pleasure, at least, in their society.

Mr. and Mrs. Singleton were both at home, so were Frederic and Amy; and two other children, younger than they, were brought down from the nursery to be introduced to Lily.

"She is looking more like a fairy than ever, now!" remarked Frederic Singleton, as Mr. Faversham came forward and shook hands with him—and he glanced half-pityingly, half-admiringly at the little invalid, whom his mother had just succeeded in establishing in a comfortable position on the sofa.

"You would not say that if you had seen her at her worst," was the old gentleman's emphatic reply. Then turning to Mr. Singleton he continued, in a voice of grateful emotion—"Under Providence I owe everything to your wife; and yet I feel that, however strong my sense of obligation may be, I can never hope to offer any but a very inadequate acknowledgment of her kindness."

"Pray do not speak of it," returned the clergyman with a pleasant smile; "Mrs. Singleton is so thoroughly interested in your young ward, that I am sure she considers herself very fortunate in having been able to render any assistance."

"She is indeed most kind and unselfish," murmured Mr. Faversham; "still——"

"I wonder if you would mind taking a look at a new conservatory which I am just now building?" exclaimed Mr. Singleton, by way of changing the subject. "I should much like to ask your advice regarding a new style of architecture which has been recommended to me, but which I am not quite certain as to the advisability of adopting."

To this proposition Mr. Faversham yielded a ready assent—the wonderful success which had attended his own doings in respect to the long-neglected winter garden having rendered him quite an authority in these matters! Accordingly they left the drawing-room together, and proceeded to visit the unfinished erection, where they remained for some time, comparing one plan with another, and discussing the various advantages and drawbacks connected with each. Afterwards Mr. Faversham accompanied his host over the Vicarage grounds, and although these seemed insignificant indeed in comparison with his own broad lands, nevertheless he could not avoid noticing the difference between the disordered aspect of the gardens at the Hall, and the exquisite neatness and

taste which characterised everything that he now saw. The prettily-arranged flower-beds, in which no single weed was permitted to rear its unsightly head; the smoothly-cut grass, on the emerald lawn; the well-kept avenue, with its double row of ancient elms; the firm gravel walks and flourishing pasture-land, all taught him a lesson, or rather deepened the impression which had previously aroused him to a consciousness of his many shortcomings, and made him resolve that, although it might be too late to redeem the past, yet by taking advantage of his present opportunities, he would, at all events, do his utmost to repair some of the evils that had arisen from his long-continued slothfulness and self-engrossment.

It is not improbable that Mr. Singleton may have perceived from the expression of his companion's countenance that some such influence was at work within him, for he gradually led the way to another and more serious subject than that on which they had so lately been conversing.

Long ere this he had succeeded in making himself acquainted with the peculiarities of

Mr. Faversham's disposition; and had therefore no difficulty in adapting his words to the particular frame of mind in which he happened to find him.

He—Mr. Singleton—was a man of rare tact; and pure, unselfish large-heartedness; one of those favoured few (let us thank God that there *are* such) whose religion consists more of *life* than *lip* service! who seem to have the happy art of doing good to all men; who have the key to every human bosom; and are respected alike by peasant and peer, Churchman and no Churchman, sinner and saint!

He was not faultless—who indeed is?—though the people among whom he walked, and for whose well-being he laboured so diligently, were wont to say that they could not detect a single flaw in his character.

He was high-born; sufficiently wealthy to render him independent, had he preferred a life of mere indolence or pleasure; and the possessor of intellectual attainments of a very superior order; and yet, to the surprise of some, and the keenly-expressed disappointment of not a few of his relations, he

had chosen to bury himself in an obscure country village, and devote his time and talents (and a considerable portion of his income besides) to the noble work of ministering to the spiritual and temporal necessities of those of whom he had thus taken the oversight, *not by constraint but willingly ; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind !*

While heartily subscribing to the doctrines of his own Church, to which he had ever been warmly attached, he was singularly free from anything like bigotry or illiberality in regard to those who belonged to a different persuasion.

He could recognise in every earnest Christian (whether found within the pale of the Church of England, or among the very smallest and least influential body of Dissenters) a kindred spirit; and when, some years previously, it so happened that a primitive-looking Wesleyan chapel was erected about half a mile from Eastwicke, and some of the more precise members of Mr. Singleton's congregation consulted him as to the expediency of warning the villagers against suffering themselves to be persuaded into

attending it, he decided on reserving his judgment until he should be able to ascertain the kind of teaching they would be likely to receive from the *ci-devant* shoemaker, who was to be the principal minister of this unpretending place of worship.

Notwithstanding Mr. Singleton's apparent quiescence, however, he contrived by some means or other to satisfy himself as to the new-comer's merits, and the time at length arrived when he adopted a very unequivocal, though somewhat original, mode of giving expression to the opinion he had formed on the subject.

He had risen in his usual health one Sunday, and after partaking of breakfast with his family, was proceeding to make ready for the early morning service, when a sudden feeling of dizziness came over him, which was instantly succeeded by an attack of illness so serious and alarming that it obliged him to retire immediately to his bed, while a messenger rushed off in hot haste for the doctor. Every one, except the sufferer himself, was in a state of the keenest and most intense anxiety. *He* remained perfectly calm

and collected, bearing the paroxysms of severe bodily pain which assailed him with unquestioning submission, and having apparently only one regret, which was that it would be too late to get any one to supply his pulpit.

"There will be no church for me to-day, my love," he said to his wife, in rather a faint voice, after he had been silently turning the matter over in his mind; "but if I could see Mr. Fisher" (one of his churchwardens) "for a moment, I think I could suggest a plan by which some at least of my people would be provided for."

"Mr. Fisher is downstairs, waiting to hear how you are going on," replied the lady, with something like reluctance in her tone.

"Let me speak to him at once, then," was the Vicar's quick rejoinder.

Mrs. Singleton had no choice but to obey, although she shook her head as if she did not altogether approve of his receiving visitors while in his present precarious state, and spoke a few words of gentle caution before admitting Mr. Fisher to her husband's room.

The interview between Mr. Singleton and his churchwarden would, under less painful circumstances, have been a most amusing one.

The amazed, incredulous look that now and again passed over the worthy Mr. Fisher's countenance, while he listened to a few brief sentences which Mr. Singleton with much difficulty but emphatic determination of purpose gave utterance to, showed more plainly than any words could possibly have done, the extreme perplexity and astonishment into which he was thus unexpectedly plunged.

"Advise—them—to—go—to—a DISSENTING MEETING HOUSE!" he stammered out at last, when Mr. Singleton had unfolded his plan, and asked for his co-operation. "My dear sir, what *do* you mean? *surely* you are not in earnest! Just consider what a bad precedent it would be! in fact, I never heard of such a thing in all my life!"

And the proud man drew up his stately figure to its full height, while he gazed upon his prostrate friend with eyes which asked him whether the attack under which he

laboured might not be one of suddenly-developed insanity!

But Mr. Singleton knew his man, and calmly waited until the first shock should subside before proceeding to urge him further. Then he reminded him how many there were, especially among the working-classes, who, if they found no place of worship open, would probably be tempted to join others in those sinful and irreverent pursuits which lead to the soul-destroying habit of Sabbath desecration.

He also reminded him (of what, indeed, Mr. Fisher was already well aware) that there were numbers who, from the love and respect they bore to himself personally, might hesitate to attend this new chapel from the mistaken idea that it would be displeasing to him.

The conversation only lasted a few minutes, and Mr. Singleton's words were spoken in a feeble, gasping voice; but ere the churchwarden left him, he had promised to do exactly what he wished—*not* because he was convinced of the judiciousness of the thing, but simply for the sake of humouring

his friend, the Vicar, whom he regarded with the most profound admiration and esteem, and for whom he would have done anything rather than cause him annoyance.

With slow and measured footsteps Mr. Fisher quitted the Vicarage, and wended his way along the village street, entering some of the cottages (the inmates of which he knew would soon proclaim the news to the rest of the neighbourhood), and mentioning what had occurred, and informing his astonished auditors that he had come by Mr. Singleton's express desire, to tell them "that as there could be no service in the parish church that day, he should take it as a personal favour if they would go to the Wesleyan chapel, where they would be sure to hear something good!"

This last was added in a slightly sarcastic tone; but Mr. Fisher flattered himself that, considering the delicacy of his position, he had performed his mission with no little tact and condescension.

"Is the parson very ill, sir?" breathlessly demanded the gossiping beadle, who rushed up to him just as he was leaving one of the cottages.

"Indeed he is, Nelson," replied Mr. Fisher, with a grave shake of the head.

"The people about here are saying he's going to die," anxiously pursued Nelson; "but surely *that's* not true?"

"I trust not," returned the churchwarden, lowering his voice somewhat as several groups of persons began to pass him on their way to the chapel; "but *after this* I should be surprised at nothing."

"After what, sir? if I may make bold to ask," queried his companion, gazing inquisitively into his face.

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Fisher, testily; "as if you didn't know already! Isn't that your wife"—pointing to a neatly-dressed woman who was walking along at some little distance, holding a clean, happy-looking child in each hand, while two others followed closely behind—"going with the rest of them to the Wesleyan chapel?"

"My wife going to a Methody meeting-house!" ejaculated the horrified beadle, a storm of righteous indignation gathering on his face. "I'll soon see about that."

He started forward as if to overtake her,

when Mr. Fisher laid his hand lightly on his arm, and said quietly, "Then you really have *not* heard ——"

And in a few words he showed him how matters stood.

"Well, that *is* queer, to be sure," remarked Nelson, rubbing his two palms reflectively together. "I can't say I like it" —here he made an unconscious grimace— "still, if the parson *wishes* it, I suppose it'll have to be done. I'd go through fire and water to please *him*."

Thus saying, he civilly touched his hat to the dignified churchwarden, and then strode swiftly away to his own home; while Mr. Fisher went to meet the doctor, who was rapidly approaching him from an opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Let a bond of sacred union
Mark of our religion prove;
And a mutual kind communion
Edify our souls in love:
Sweet resemblance to Thy family above."

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

When Mr. Dixon—the *ci-devant* shoemaker—entered his chapel that Sunday morning, he gazed around him in absolute bewilderment. Instead of the small handful of persons whom he had been accustomed to see (for there were more Churchmen than Dissenters in those parts), the place was literally crowded even to the steps of the pulpit. He had heard nothing of Mr. Singleton's illness, and was consequently quite at a loss to account for the increased size of his congregation; but one of his own people glided up to him as he entered the building, and whispered a word or two in his ear, whereupon

he shook his head slightly, cast another keen, searching glance around him, and then proceeded with some little difficulty to make his way into the pulpit. When there he stood for a moment looking down upon the people with a grave, concerned face, and eyes that gleamed with a tender, pitiful light. "My friends," he said at length—and he spoke like one under the influence of some powerful emotion—"I cannot bid you welcome here to-day, for I have just learnt the painful cause of your unexpected presence within these walls. But with God all things are possible; therefore we will lay your case before Him, and ask Him to extend His mercy towards you and restore your beloved friend, the Vicar of this parish, to health."

Then followed a prayer—a simple, earnest, pleading prayer, such as touched the hearts of all, and brought tears to the eyes of many—after which the preacher gave out the hymn commencing—

"Comfort, ye ministers of grace,
Comfort My people, saith your God!
Ye soon shall see His smiling face,
His golden sceptre, not His rod;
And own, when now the cloud's removed,
He only chastened whom He loved!"

Of the sermon I cannot venture to speak, for it seemed from beginning to end to be one fervid outburst of rude eloquence, under the spell of which the attentive audience sat entranced, intently listening to each word which fell from the preacher's lips, and inwardly marvelling at the extraordinary gift which could thus enable a poor uneducated man to discourse so mightily and convincingly on those lofty themes that have ofttimes proved most baffling to the wise and learned.

He took for his text the singularly appropriate words—"Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God;" and it was very evident that some particular parts of his sermon bore especial reference to what had that morning transpired.

So at least thought Mr. Fisher, whom an unaccountable impulse had induced at the last moment to make one of the congregation. He stood just inside the doorway, having declined with a dignified gesture the pantomimic offer of an exchange of places made him by the obliging beadle, who, though himself one of the late arrivals, had

yet contrived to secure a comfortable seat, albeit it was at the expense of some one else; and, folding his arms with a supremely indifferent air, he prepared himself to listen to what should follow.

Not long did he maintain this unconcerned attitude, however, for in spite of his prejudices and sectarianism, and the exclusiveness which had hitherto rendered him intolerant of the peculiar formulas of every other denomination except his own, he could not help acknowledging that he had never before heard a sermon like this; and the keen, dark eyes, which had been wandering with a slightly contemptuous expression around the rudely constructed chapel, with its bare whitewashed walls, and cushionless seats, were now unconsciously riveted upon the preacher's face, from whence they never again were removed until a general hush told him that the sermon was ended. Then, without waiting for the concluding hymn, Mr. Fisher quietly took his departure, and once more bent his steps towards the Vicarage; pondering over what he had heard, and trying to solve the question which had

suddenly arisen in his mind as to the real motive which had actuated Mr. Singleton in wishing his people to listen to the teaching of a man who was in all respects, save one, the exact opposite of himself.

"It isn't *every* clergyman who would have the courage to act like this," he murmured; "*some* would certainly object on the score of its being contrary to the established usages of our Church; while *others*, again, might shrink from the responsibility of countenancing such a step, from the fear lest it should lead to something else; perhaps, indeed, end in certain of their own flock going over to the Dissenters; but *he* is *above* being influenced by any such motives as these."

The churchwarden judged correctly. Mr. Singleton had often and often lamented the want of love and unity which so frequently prevails among those who happen to differ —in many cases very slightly—regarding the externals of religion. Often had he asked himself how it was that Dissenters should rail at Churchmen, and Churchmen stand aloof from Dissenters; that pride on the one hand, and bigotry on the other,

should be suffered to separate those who are traversing the same pathway, holding the same faith, led by the same Captain, and serving the same Master; and when the opportunity for proclaiming his own views on the subject arrived, he did not hesitate to take advantage of it.

One of the first visits he paid when sufficiently recovered to leave the house, was to the cottage of Mr. Dixon. He found the good man digging in his little garden; but the spade was quickly discarded when Mr. Singleton appeared, and the shoemaker's cap was courteously lifted from his head as he responded to the Vicar's salutation, and respectfully expressed his pleasure at the meeting.

"I am come to thank you for the kind terms in which you spoke of me when I was ill," said Mr. Singleton, holding out his hand, and speaking in a tone of cheerful cordiality.

"Indeed, sir, it is I who ought to thank *you* for the mark of confidence with which you honoured me," rejoined the other, with a sudden lighting up of his pale, grave countenance. "I appreciated it all the more from

the fact that from *other quarters* I had met with nothing but opposition."

"Yes, I can believe that," was Mr. Singleton's sympathising reply; "but matters will improve."

"They are improving already, sir," answered Mr. Dixon, with a bright smile; "the people no longer look upon me with the same suspiciousness as they did, and I hope that I may eventually succeed in convincing them that our little chapel was built, not for the purpose of interfering with the members of other churches, but merely for the sake of those who belong to our own persuasion."

"I, at all events, will most heartily bid you God-speed!" returned Mr. Singleton, warmly; "and if at any time I can be of the slightest assistance to you I hope you will not hesitate to let me know. I suppose," he continued, with one of those sunny smiles which seemed to irradiate his whole countenance, "the simple fact of our being called by different names need not prevent us from working together in the service of our common Master?"

"I hope not, indeed, sir," cried Dixon, an expression of glad surprise crossing his face at the idea of being thus associated with one for whom he entertained so great a respect; "for it would give me more pleasure than I could express."

A long and interesting conversation ensued, in the course of which Mr. Singleton was made acquainted with the exact position which his unconscious rival occupied in the estimation of the villagers; as well as various particulars respecting the principles, management, and monetary arrangements connected with the recently built chapel. And when the two finally took leave of each other, it was with feelings of mutual esteem and satisfaction.

A few days subsequently Mr. Dixon received a donation of £50 towards the liquidation of the debt which still remained upon the chapel; and although the anonymous sender carefully abstained from giving any clue which might lead to his identification, yet Dixon could not shake off the impression that the money really came from the Vicar himself.

Months and years passed away, and still the Churchman and Dissenter continued firm friends, notwithstanding their separate interests, the diversity of many of their opinions, and the strangely distinct positions which they were called upon to fill. And when it so happened that one of those restless-spirited individuals (who are to be found in every community, however peaceful and united), whose chief pleasure appears to consist in hearing or repeating some startling *on dit* bearing reference to the character or conduct of certain of their acquaintances, mentioned the little incident I have recorded to the Bishop of the diocese, *he* only smiled, and remarked with that large-hearted liberality for which he was so justly distinguished, that "if there were more Churchmen like Mr. Singleton there would perhaps be fewer Dissenters."

But to return from this long digression. When Mr. Faversham and his host re-entered the drawing-room after their stroll in the Vicarage grounds, they found the children all congregated together in one of the deep oriel windows. A very merry tea-party had

just been concluded, at which Edith's dolls had made their appearance, to the secret disgust of Frederic, who looked upon an invitation to one of these juvenile entertainments as a personal insult, although he did not like to make an open avowal of his sentiments, lest he should thereby hurt the feelings of his younger sisters, especially as *they* fancied they were conferring the greatest compliment upon him when they asked him to sit at the bottom of the table, and assist them in doing the honours to their numerous guests.

One glance at Lily's animated countenance assured Mr. Faversham that she had thoroughly enjoyed her visit; and he cordially assented to Mrs. Singleton's request that it might be often repeated.

The following day saw Frederic and Amy Singleton at the Hall, and from thenceforth there was a constant interchange of visits between the two families.

Before the expiry of many weeks, Lily and Amy had become inseparable companions. Sometimes the latter was permitted, at Lily's earnest desire, to remain with her for days, and even weeks together; and it was quite

plain, both to Mrs. Singleton and Mr. Faversham, that each influenced the other for good. Amy, although much older than Lily, was so timid and retiring, that she derived no little benefit from her intercourse with one whose disposition was so thoroughly open and confiding, while Lily herself gained in many ways from having such a suitable playmate.

Mr. Faversham often detected himself in the unconscious act of listening to their artless prattle, as they amused themselves in the winter garden, *he* being seated in his favourite chair just within the pink drawing-room; and many were the curious lessons they unwittingly taught him, while conversing in their own simple, guileless fashion on subjects which to *their* unsophisticated minds could have but one interpretation, and lead only to one result.

Although Amy's sentiments in regard to the unfortunate One-eye were much the same as her young friend's, she found that no amount of attention on her part could induce him to allow *her* similar privileges to those which he had been in the habit of ac-

cording to his recognised mistress. He tolerated Amy—sometimes barely that—but he never permitted the slightest familiarity, and would fly into a desperate rage if she came quite up to his perch; while *Lily* was perhaps at the very moment fearlessly engaged in stroking the dingy drab feathers with her delicate little fingers or patting the ugly, distorted face which was wont to assume such extraordinary grimaces when in any way excited or displeased.

Once, Mr. Faversham overheard the two children earnestly discussing the relative merits of all the other members of the well-stocked aviary; and after a lengthened consideration of each bird's special claim to their admiration or regard, they returned to *One-eye*, and commenced an absorbing consultation respecting him, which resulted at last in a grave debate as to the cause of his partial blindness, and the probability of his ever recovering the sight of his defective organ. This question, however, proving too perplexing for their inexperienced judgment, they resolved on referring the matter to the staid-looking gardener, who was attend-

ing to some plants at a distant part of the building, and who would, they had no doubt, be able to give them a satisfactory answer.

Mr. Faversham smiled as they arrived at this determination. He thought he could guess the sort of reply they would receive; as Cactus, the gardener—or *florist*, as he preferred to be called—had never regarded One-eye with anything but aversion, and would not therefore be likely to take the most hopeful view of the case.

But in spite of his—the Squire—being thus, as he imagined, fully prepared for whatever disparaging remark Cactus might make, he could scarcely refrain from laughing outright when that sober, sensible man proceeded to enlighten Lily and her friend as to his own private opinion of their much-admired favourite.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Affliction, when it spreads around,
May seem a field of woe;
Yet there, at last, the happy fruits
Of righteousness shall grow."
SCOTCH PARAPHRASE.

"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

CACTUS glanced up in surprise as the two little girls approached him hand in hand, and asked him, in tones of the utmost seriousness, what he thought of One-eye!

"What do I think of One-eye!" he repeated, looking from one to the other with an air of considerable mystification; "why, I have often told you ——"

"Oh, but we don't want to hear 'bout that!" hastily exclaimed Lily, who was probably pretty well aware of what was coming. "Amy and I are anxious to know" (you should have heard the curious way in

which she pronounced *anxious*) "whether we could do anything to make him better; one of his eyes, you see, is quite skewed up!"

"Yes, I see that well enough," assented Cactus, glancing askance at him — "the hideous creature!"

"He always *will* call the poor thing *hideous!*" remarked Lily, in a doleful aside to her friend; "but he isn't hideous at all, is he, Amy?"

"No; I'm sure he's not," answered the other, warmly; "and, besides, he can't help his looks."

"S'pose *you* had one of your eyes skewed up like that," observed Lily, in a voice of dignified reproof, to the tall, strong man at her side; "you would wish to be made well again, wouldn't you?"

"Well, perhaps I might," replied Cactus, putting up his hand to hide a smile; "but you see, miss, there's no cure that I know of for blindness."

"Isn't there!" said Lily, with an expression of great concern; "that's a pity."

"Couldn't the doctor do any good?" suggested Amy.

"Not he!" returned Cactus, with a very decided gesture; "it's altogether out of his line."

"Dear me! Lily's very sorry," said the tender-hearted child, gravely shaking her head.

"If I were you I wouldn't mind it so much," rejoined Cactus, by way of consoling her. "One-eye's quite accustomed to his blindness by this time."

"I don't b'lieve he likes it, though," was Lily's emphatic reply; "and p'raps that's the reason he gets so angry sometimes—just 'cause he wants to see with both eyes, and can't."

"Well, for *my* part, I think he sees too much already," affirmed the gardener; "he's far too clever for a mere bird!"

Then, seeing the look of astonishment with which he was regarded by both the children, he went on in a tone of explanation—"I don't consider myself superstitious in general; but really it's my belief that the creature is not altogether canny!"

"Canny!" echoed Lily, turning her bewildered face to Amy; "what's that?"

"I think he means that One-eye isn't nice," she replied, in an audible whisper; "but I don't know."

"It's all very well for little miss there," pointing to Lily, "to say that he can't understand what he's talking about; but I'm inclined to be of a different opinion, and so is Mrs. Crossley, I suspect. The fact is," continued the fanciful man, gazing down upon the children from the height of his superior wisdom, "there's no other way of accounting for the spiteful things he says. *Other* parrots content themselves with merely repeating certain sentences which they have been taught; but One-eye positively speaks like a Christian,—leastways," with an embarrassed little cough, as he detected his mistake, "like a human being; and I should be glad to know how he could possibly say the right thing to the right person, as he is constantly doing, unless he had an idea of what it meant."

All this was uttered with such unmistakable seriousness and decision, that Lily and Amy looked dubiously at each other, as if half convinced that Cactus must be right.

Then they glanced simultaneously at One-eye's perch; but, finding that there was no perceptible change in the poor bird's insignificant appearance since last they had seen him, their doubts began to vanish, and it was with quite a merry little laugh that Lily turned once more towards the superstitious gardener, and exclaimed, in a tone of playful remonstrance—"You shouldn't say such funny things, Cactus; I'm quite sure One-eye doesn't mean to be naughty, 'cause ganpa told me so! and ganpa knows far more 'bout him than you do, *'cause*"—this was evidently brought forward as an irrefutable argument in favour of the bird's innocence—"he *bought* him."

"Now, look here, miss," said the unbelieving Cactus; "only this morning I happened to be over there," pointing to a far-away corner, "quietly engaged in cutting down that large plant you were admiring the other day, when all of a sudden I heard him calling out—'*What are you doing there, sir?*' in such a loud, angry voice, that if I had been a thief caught in the very act of stealing I could not have felt more startled.

Just listen to him now," added the irritated man, as the parrot at that instant broke into one of his scornful, mocking laughs; "doesn't it seem as if he knew what I was saying, and wanted to show that he didn't care?"

But Lily was too much accustomed to One-eye's drolleries to view the matter in the same serious light; she only smiled at the ridiculous question, and then fell into ecstasies over a fresh flower which Cactus had just placed among the rest. By-and-by she and Amy went over to examine the plant on which he had so lately been exercising his skill; after which they ran back to him again, and Lily, with a very rueful countenance, began to complain of what he had done.

"It was such a beautiful plant," she said, regretfully, "and now it doesn't look beautiful at all."

"Well, my dear, I take it that plants and people are pretty much alike," replied Cactus, with wonderful good humour; "it doesn't always do to let them follow their own devices; and when I found that this plant *would* persist in growing the *wrong way*

I was obliged to take measures for putting it right."

"Do people ever grow the wrong way?" asked Lily, with one of her puzzled looks.

"Ay, that they do," was the unhesitating response; "many a time."

"But how *can* they do it?" queried the still bewildered child.

"Perhaps you can tell us that, miss," said Cactus, respectfully addressing Amy; "being a parson's daughter, you see, makes a difference."

Poor Amy could not understand that kind of reasoning at all; but, after a little demur, she suggested—"I suppose it is when we are wicked?"

"Yes, that's about it, I think," returned Cactus, nodding his head in token of approbation; "we all require some sort of check at times—just as a gardener prunes all his trees, you know; though some of us require a great deal more attention in this respect than others."

"And what is gen'ally done to *people* when they grow wrong?" was Lily's next pertinent inquiry.

"Sometimes one thing and sometimes another."

"But what sort of things?" persisted Lily, on whom the gardener's lucid explanations had produced a most bewildering effect: her mind had as yet merely grasped one single idea, and she was utterly astounded at the thought of persons being subjected to the same treatment as plants. Amy at length came to her aid by saying softly—"Perhaps God sends them trouble to make them good again."

"Yes, that's true, any way," responded Cactus, who had only imperfectly understood what she said; "we all have our troubles—there can be no two opinions on that subject. There's my poor wife, now," he went on, meditatively, and in apparent forgetfulness of the presence of his youthful auditors; "she suffers so much that she is a perfect martyr; and at the present moment she cannot even put her foot to the ground."

"And was she *very* wicked before God made her suffer?" asked Lily, in all simplicity.

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated the

horror-stricken man, "what a question to ask! No, no, miss," he continued, with the slightest shade of annoyance in his tone; "she is a most excellent woman. I only wish *I* was half as good. Not that I am what may be called a bad man," he added quickly, seeing that Lily was going to speak, and fearing perhaps that she might be about to institute some searching inquiry as to his own misdeeds—"still, I couldn't for an instant compare myself to her."

"I thought you said that it was when people got wicked that the troubles came," explained Lily, in an apologetic tone. She perceived that she had in some way hurt his feelings, though she could not by any means comprehend the ground of his annoyance.

"So I did," cried Cactus, recovering his good humour as he seemed for the first time struck with the inconsistency of his doctrine; "but then I never meant my own wife, you know. *Her* troubles did not come about in that way—quite the contrary, I should say."

"I suppose there must be two kinds of

troubles, then," said the thoughtful little Amy, in answer to the look of wonder with which Lily was gazing at her; "*one* to make wicked people good, and *the other* to make good people better."

"You've just hit it, miss!" replied Cactus, with an appearance of relief; "there's a verse in the Bible which tells us as much, only I don't at this instant remember it."

"Where does she live?" demanded Lily, somewhat abruptly.

"Where does who live?" was the surprised rejoinder.

"The good woman that God wants to make better—Lily would like to go and see her."

"Would you, indeed?" said Cactus, a gleam of gratification coming to his face; "she would give you a hearty welcome."

"Then we'll go," promptly decided Lily; "Amy, and me, and ganpa—won't we, Amy?"

The latter assented, but with far less warmth than that evinced by her companion, for she did not as yet feel sufficiently at ease

with Mr. Faversham to look forward with any particular pleasure to his accompanying them.

"I'm afraid it won't do," remarked Cactus presently, in an altered voice, and a manner which had suddenly become reserved and hesitating; "the Squire would never approve of such a thing, so 'twould be far better not to ask him. *I* know what gentlemen are!"—this was muttered with compressed lips and a lowering brow—"they look upon the working classes as inferior to themselves, and consider it's beneath their dignity to step into a poor man's cottage."

"Indeed, my ganpa is very *fond* of poor people," indignantly protested Lily, who had caught the meaning of the last sentence; "I saw him giving a poor man lots of money the other day, and he has bought old Peggy such a beautiful large Bible, full of pictures, 'cause she couldn't see to read in her old one."

"Well, my dear, I was only speaking in general terms," deprecated Cactus; "personally, I haven't a word to say against the Squire; but I must confess to having a fair

share of pride, and I was afraid he might object to your going to visit a person like my wife, of whom he knows so little. If he *does* let you come, however, she will be delighted to see you—and Miss Singleton too" —with a smile and a nod at the retiring Amy; "and though she has no screaming parrots," glancing meaningly at One-eye, "to amuse you, she is not altogether without her pets; and I make a point of keeping her well supplied with flowers, so that the place may look bright and cheery for her — poor thing!"

Thus saying, he resumed his former occupation, occasionally interrupting himself to recount some noteworthy anecdote relating to this wife of whom he was so proud. He told them that he had for a long term of years resided in London; but the doctor who attended his wife having recommended country air for her, he had thrown up the situation he held there, and engaged himself to Mr. Faversham, who was looking out for a steady, responsible person, to take charge of his winter garden.

Everything he said had the effect of

strengthening Lily's anxiety to become acquainted with such a remarkable woman, and she could at length restrain her impatience no longer, but, interrupting Cactus in the very middle of a sentence, she ran into the pink drawing-room, and eagerly preferred her request to be allowed to go that afternoon to pay a visit to Mrs. Cactus.

"Couldn't she come to you instead?" asked Mr. Faversham, removing his eyes from the newspaper on which they had been unconsciously riveted during the whole of the foregoing conversation.

"Oh, no, she couldn't do that," replied Lily, mysteriously; "she's a—oh, dear, what *did* Cactus call her?" puckering up her smooth white forehead, and trying hard to recal the word.

"A martyr?" suggested Mr. Faversham, with a look and a smile which would have aroused the suspicions of Cactus if he had seen them.

"Yes, that's it! and she lies upon a sofa all the day, except sometimes when Cactus takes her out in a chair. And she has got a lot of pets, only he won't tell us what they

are, except that they don't sk'eam like One-eye; and—oh, yes, I forgot!—he gives her the most beautiful f'owers to make the place *chcery*—now, isn't that nice, ganpa?"

Mr. Faversham — concluding, no doubt, that she must be alluding to the last, and not the first, part of her somewhat discursive exposition—answered in the affirmative; and on her again urging the importance of their losing no time in going to see so excellent a person, he took her by the hand, and slowly made his way through the winter garden, pausing when he came in front of Cactus, and saying gravely—"If you can assure me that there is nothing infectious the matter with your wife, Cactus, I shall be happy to let Miss Lily visit her as often as she wishes."

"Thank you, sir," cordially responded the other, "she will be very pleased indeed to see the little lady; and you needn't be afraid, Squire"—here he lowered his tone—"that there's the least risk in letting her come: it's a spine complaint that my poor wife suffers from."

"I see—I see," returned Mr. Faversham,

kindly. "It is necessary to make these inquiries, you know," he added, considerately; "especially in the case of so young and delicate a child."

"Oh, yes, sir; I quite understand that," said Cactus, in a tone of unusual respect—he was wondering in his own mind how it was that the Squire should have ever been deemed haughty or domineering.

"I cannot accompany you myself today," continued Mr. Faversham, turning towards the two children, "because I have promised to go to a meeting with Mr. Singleton; but I dare say Mary will take good care of you; or perhaps Cactus might wish to introduce you himself?"

But Cactus negatived this plan, on the plea that *he* could not possibly spare the time; as it was absolutely necessary that he should spend the whole afternoon in one of the conservatories, which had been recently repaired, and was now being restocked with flowers; so that it was Mary to whom the children were eventually confided, and who escorted them at the appointed hour to the gardener's cottage—a small but exceedingly pretty

abode, situated on Mr. Faversham's own estate.

Mrs. Cactus was quite prepared for their visit, her husband having informed her of their intention when he hurried home for his early dinner. She received them in a room which seemed to Lily's admiring eyes all flowers and sunshine. White curtains of some elegant lacey pattern shaded the windows; a few choice pictures hung on the walls; a thick mossy carpet covered the floor; curious little knick-knacks were displayed upon a distant cabinet; whilst the writing-desk, working materials, and other useful articles scattered over the large round table (which latter was placed close to the sofa occupied by the invalid), as well as the presence of several well-filled book-cases, some of whose contents were evidently in daily requisition, showed that the apartment was not by any means designed for mere ornament.

Mrs. Cactus herself was a delicate-looking woman, with a calm, gentle face, and eyes that seemed to be always gazing at something pleasant, so tender and loving was their

expression. She gave the two children quite as cordial a reception as her husband had promised them; and, after a little hesitation, Mary agreed to leave them in her charge for the remainder of the afternoon, while she proceeded to the village to execute some commissions for Crossley.

Lily and Amy looked around them with the greatest interest and surprise. Everything was so different to what they had expected. Even Mrs. Cactus astonished them by being not very unlike other people —her husband's glowing representations having prepared them for something quite out of the common. They could, in fact, scarcely realise that she was ill at all, she seemed so happy, and spoke so cheerfully. After conversing for a while upon various subjects which she thought might amuse them, the invalid showed them the soft, woollen articles her busy fingers were knitting, and then directed their attention to the contents of the old-fashioned cabinet, giving a separate history of each curiosity in its turn, and explaining how it came into her possession.

On the whole, the children thought they had rarely spent a pleasanter afternoon; and, before they left, the same neat attendant who had opened the door for them when they first arrived, came into the room, bringing a quaint little tea-service, comprising a small china tea-pot, cream-ewer, and sugar-basin, together with three handleless cups. This she placed on the table, close to her mistress, and instantly withdrew for such other things as were considered requisite towards making up a comfortable meal.

Seeing that Lily's eyes were fixed with a somewhat puzzled expression upon the cups as they were being filled with tea, Mrs. Cactus laughingly informed her that they were very old, and very beautiful, and that she prized them exceedingly, and never used them except on special occasions—like the present.

The meal was nearly ended when a sudden thought struck Lily, and she inquired anxiously—"Haven't you got some pets? Lily doesn't see any," with rather a disappointed look round the room, "only the f'owers."

"Yes, I have a handsome Persian cat,"

she smilingly replied; "and I have something else too," pointing to a basket, which stood near one of the windows—"*Tiny, come here.*"

Directly these words were uttered—in rather a raised tone—the small quilted down cover that was thrown over the basket began to move, and the tiniest and prettiest of dogs emerged from the seclusion of its warm nest, and ran towards the sofa.

Mrs. Cactus took the little creature in her arms, and passed her fingers caressingly over the soft snowy coat. Afterwards she put it into Lily's lap, and both she and Amy devoted themselves to it, until such time as the silky-haired cat created a diversion by making its appearance at the open door, and claiming for itself a share of the admiration which was so freely bestowed upon its rival.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Sir, you are very welcome to our house."

"It must appear in other ways than words;
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy."

"It gives me wonder great as my content,
To see you here before me."

THREE years have swiftly and imperceptibly glided away since Lily paid her first visit to the gardener's wife, and became acquainted with the silky-haired cat and small Maltese dog; and we find her, as a natural consequence, much increased in stature, though she still bears a striking resemblance to her name, being slender and graceful, with the same lovely complexion, and sunny bright eyes, and golden tinted hair, as when she was first introduced to our notice.

She is improved, too, in other respects, having thrown aside the babyish language in which she had been accustomed to make her wants known; and instead of running wild about the house, with no companions save

her pets or her nurse, she spends a considerable portion of her time every day in the society of a certain accomplished lady—Madame Montague by name—who having had the misfortune to lose her husband and sons in one battle, and being, moreover, very slenderly provided with pecuniary resources, was glad to accept Mr. Faversham's proposal (tendered her through Mrs. Singleton, who had known and admired her in her prosperous days) that she should undertake the education of his youthful charge.

Thanks to Lily's docility, and the thoughtful kindness of the Squire, who gave the strictest orders that she should be treated with the utmost respect and consideration, Madame Montague found the task a very pleasing one.

A complete suite of apartments were singled out for her, close to those occupied by Lily, who had long ago been put into possession of a large bedroom and dressing-room, which Mr. Faversham had had refurnished, expressly for his darling; and teacher and pupil soon became the best of friends.

For the last year Lily has been studying with her friend Amy Singleton. This arrangement was suggested by Madame herself, who thought that it would be a mutual benefit to them; and Mrs. Singleton, fully appreciating the advantages which her own little daughter would thereby receive, cordially acceded to the proposal. She knew that there was not the slightest danger, either of Amy urging Lily on, or Lily keeping Amy back; for although the one was older, and, of course, further advanced than the other, yet of the two Lily was decidedly the quickest.

Each morning, therefore, at ten o'clock, Amy's white pony was seen trotting briskly up the long avenue; and many were the delightful hours they spent together after lessons were over; sometimes amusing themselves in the house or grounds; sometimes paying a flying visit to old Peggy Morison, or the much-enduring Mrs. Cactus; sometimes taking extensive walks, and still more extensive drives, with Mr. Faversham; but oftener by far accompanying him in an exhilarating ride on their sure-footed ponies —for the old man had faithfully kept his

word, and Lily was now a very fair horse-woman.

Madame Montague never interfered with the children after they left the school-room. She rarely, indeed, passed the threshold of her own apartments, except to go to church, or make an occasional call at the Vicarage. Even her meals were, by her special request, served in her private sitting-room; but in spite of these trifling peculiarities she was neither dull nor ascetic. Her bereavements had entirely unfitted her for general society, she said, and she hoped she might be excused for preferring to remain for the most part in solitude. Mrs. Singleton, however, who was probably better acquainted with her ways and motives than any one else, strongly suspected that it was more on account of Mr. Faversham than herself that she pursued this course; as she could not fail to observe the intense pleasure which he manifested in Lily's society, and perhaps she felt that the constant presence of a third person—more especially that of a stranger like herself—must be some sort of restraint upon him.

But her vivacious pupil was always making

some pretext for relieving the monotony of this self-imposed isolation. Often would Madame Montague hear her light tap at the door, and have to lay down her pen—she usually employed her spare time in translating some not sufficiently-known French book into the English language—and listen to Lily's entreaties that she would go with them for a drive, or come downstairs to the pink drawing-room and talk to Mr. Faversham, or do a hundred other things which she fancied might give her pleasure.

And the discreet elderly lady (whose widows' weeds lent her such an indescribably dignified appearance in the eyes of the children, that they looked upon her with an equal mixture of admiration and awe)received these small attentions with evident gratification, though she generally dismissed the little coaxer with a kiss and a smile and a vague promise that she would see about it, when she was less busy.

On this particular morning, however, Lily enters the sitting-room of her accomplished preceptress with much less ceremony than usual; and when Madame Montague looks

up from her writing, to see who the intruder might be, she is absolutely transfixed with astonishment on beholding not only Lily, but also Amy Singleton, whom she had taken leave of for the day, as she supposed, only half an hour previously; while bringing up the rear came a middle-aged person, apparently an upper servant, carrying something in her arms.

"My dear," exclaimed the precise lady, addressing Lily in a tone of mild rebuke, "what is the meaning of this extraordinary behaviour?"

"Oh, Madame, please excuse me," she replied, becoming conscious of her error directly she found herself in the presence of her dignified instructress; "but I really could *not* help bringing it in for you to see."

"What is it?" inquired the widow, in a calm, cold voice—she had no doubt that it was some new pet that Lily wanted to show her, and pets were her aversion!

"It's the sweetest little darling you ever saw!" continued her pupil, ecstatically; "its face is perfectly lovely; and *such* hands and feet."

"Hands!" repeated the bewildered lady, gazing from one to the other in no little surprise.

"It's the new baby, ma'am," explained the middle-aged woman, coming smilingly forward and displaying her burden with an air of considerable importance. "Miss Lily has been quite wild to see it ever since she heard there *was* one; and so Mrs. Singleton told me I might bring it over."

"I begin to understand you now," said Madame Montague, with less stiffness of manner. "You mean to tell me that this is Mrs. Singleton's infant?"

"Yes, and I shall never, never care for my Polly again as long as I live!" was Lily's irrelevant answer.

"That is just because you are getting older," remarked the matter-of-fact Amy. "*I* don't care much for dolls now."

"But that isn't my reason," returned Lily, with a very determined shake of the head. "If you compare my doll with this baby you will see the difference—one is real and the other is *not!*"

Madame Montague allowed herself to be

amused at this simple elucidation of the matter, and there was a pleasant smile on her lips as she turned to examine the object of Lily's laudation.

"It is indeed a very beautiful child," she observed, after the survey was ended; "I do not wonder at your admiration."

Then she moved across the room, and opening a small inlaid box took out a pearl cross, which was suspended from a slender gold chain. This she threw over the baby's neck, saying that Mrs. Singleton would be sure to recognise it, as she knew its history, and could remember the time when she used to wear it herself.

Five minutes later and Madame Montague had succeeded in getting rid of her visitors, and was pursuing her literary labours—the children and nurse having proceeded to Lily's dressing-room with the intention of comparing the imitation baby with the real one!

Lily was much disappointed at not being able to show the infant to Mr. Faversham; but he was in the library writing letters, and Crossley advised her not to disturb him; so

the nurse and baby went away, accompanied by Amy, who had promised to be home early that day; and Lily, feeling rather dull after their departure, took up an interesting story-book, and entering the library ensconced herself in a cosy corner between the heavy curtains and the large bay window, and commenced to read.

For the next quarter of an hour no sound was heard except the scratch of Mr. Faversham's quill pen; but when that time had expired, if *he* had not been wholly engrossed with his letters, and *Lily* with her book, they must both have become conscious of the sound of wheels rapidly approaching the house. A sonorous peal of the hall bell quickly followed, and after the lapse of nearly ten minutes the library door was thrown open, and a stranger ushered into the room.

"I beg your pardon, but I did not quite catch the name," said Mr. Faversham, laying aside his pen, and courteously rising to receive his unknown visitor.

He had a strong suspicion that this visitor had been shown in *unannounced*, though he could scarcely bring himself to believe that

the expert footman—a nephew of Crossley's, who was as a general rule so exceedingly particular in the discharge of his duties—*could* by any possibility have been guilty of such gross inattention.

"I have to apologise on my own account," replied the stranger—a tall, distinguished-looking man, with a frank, gentlemanlike manner, and a countenance that was strikingly handsome—"for venturing thus unceremoniously to make your acquaintance. At present I am *personally* unknown to you, but I trust——"

He stopped abruptly, for there was a sudden tremulous movement of the window-curtains, instantly succeeded by the noise of a book falling upon the carpet, and *Lily* came forth from her retreat.

She stood for a moment perfectly still, with her two hands clasped tightly together, her lips parted in breathless expectancy, and her eyes riveted with an eager, searching expression upon the stranger's face.

He involuntarily moved a step towards her; then checked himself, and waited to see what she would do.

With a little cry of joyous surprise she darted forward, exclaiming, in a husky, choking voice, "Are you papa?"

"My darling! my little one!" answered the gentleman, unable any longer to conceal his agitation, "how could you possibly remember me!"

And, clasping her in his arms, he kissed her cheek, and lip, and brow, with undisguised emotion; while she put her hands about his neck, and clung to him with the utmost fondness.

But Mr. Faversham!—how did he feel?

For the space of a few seconds he remained standing, like one petrified! Then, with a smothered groan, he sank into a seat, and unconsciously closed his eyes, as if he would fain shut out some painful sight.

Presently, however, he reopened them, and, fixing them with a peculiar expression upon the stranger, said, in a voice of suppressed excitement, "I suppose I am to conclude that you are Lily's father?"

"Yes," replied the other, putting the child gently down, and advancing a step nearer the old man; "but I regret much

that circumstances should have led me to disclose the fact in so precipitate a manner. I fully expected to have found you alone, and——" a slight shade of embarrassment appeared on his face; but Mr. Faversham's eyes were still regarding him with that fixed, penetrating gaze, and he continued hastily, "My errand here to-day was two-fold. First, to offer you my most sincere thanks for all the kindness you have shown my child during her long sojourn under your roof; and, secondly——"

"Pray spare yourself the trouble of touching on *that* head," interrupted Mr. Faversham, in a tone of angry irritation, which under the circumstances was surely not quite inexcusable; "I comprehend your meaning well enough; but allow me to ask you whether *you* have acted in this manner with common fairness, either towards myself or your daughter?"

"I am not sure that I quite understand you," was the significant rejoinder.

"For some mysterious reason of your own you suddenly see fit to *thrust*—I can use no other word—a strange child upon me,

one of whom I knew literally nothing, and for whom I cared still less; and *now*, when years have elapsed, and I have taken her to my heart, and adopted her as my very own, you coolly come to claim her, without giving me any previous intimation of your intentions, or preparing me in the slightest degree for my impending loss."

"I was just going to explain all these matters to you," returned the younger man, in a gentle, conciliatory tone; "but perhaps we had better be alone"—he added this with a start of recollection. Then, taking Lily's hand, he led her to the door, whispering hurriedly in her ear, "Run away to Crossley, my dear; she has something to show you."

"Is it mamma?" demanded the child, with the quick instinct of affection.

"Go and see," was the reply.

She went. And then commenced a curious conversation between the two gentlemen.

Lily's father had a delicate mission to perform, and could think of nothing but the best mode of accomplishing it without causing Mr. Faversham any unnecessary

pain. *He*, on the other hand, was wholly absorbed in the reflection that this stranger having come with the avowed purpose of asserting his rights, *he* and his darling must perforce be separated.

"Why are you so unreasonable?" demanded the old man, somewhat querulously.

"In what way am I unreasonable?" answered his companion, with the nearest approach to a smile upon his lips.

"You have done without her all these years—why not do without her altogether?"

"Ah, that is another matter!" rejoined his visitor, gravely shaking his head.

"If you were a poor man, now," continued Mr. Faversham, in a slow, hesitating voice, though he watched his visitor with the utmost intentness to mark the effect of his words, "I could make it worth your while to give her up! Half my fortune would scarcely——"

"But I am *not* a poor man," replied Lily's father, drawing himself up with a degree of hauteur for which his host was quite unprepared.

"All the worse for me!" ejaculated the

latter; "but perhaps," he went on, trying a different tack, "you may have other children besides this one?"

"Yes, I have three."

"Three besides Lily!" cried Mr. Faversham, excitedly; "then surely you will not grudge me this one little flower that I have reared so tenderly, and loved so well?"

He spoke pathetically—entreatingly; and it was with moistened eyes, and in a very gentle voice, that he was answered—"You forget one thing, Mr. Faversham."

"What do I forget?" inquired the old man, relapsing into his former despondent attitude.

"You seem to take it for granted that everything rests with me; whereas there is another person who might reasonably expect to be consulted on so serious a subject—I allude to Lily's mother!"

"Her mother!" repeated Mr. Faversham, a sudden tide of recollection rushing across his bewildered brain; "true, I did indeed lose sight of her."

"*She* might object, you know, even if *I* were willing," began the stranger, in a slow,

cautious strain, "unless—but here she comes to speak for herself," he added, in a tone of relief, which was, however, largely mingled with anxiety, as the door at that instant flew open, and Lily, with a face all smiles and sunshine, rushed in, and going straight up to the old man's chair, said simply—"She's come, grandpa! Won't you be *delighted* to see her?"

Mr. Faversham turned to look at the lady thus strangely introduced to him; he attempted also to rise from his seat; but before he could do either one or the other, *she* had swiftly crossed the room, and flinging herself impulsively down at his side, exclaimed, with an outburst of hysterical tears—"Oh! papa, will you forgive me?"

"Ellen, my child—my *dear* child! is this really you? or am I dreaming?" cried the bewildered man, gazing with half-blinded eyes into her excited countenance.

"Do say that you forgive me, papa," sobbed his impetuous, warm-hearted daughter, as she seized his trembling hands, and carried them to her lips; "*do say it!* and then I shall be so happy."

"Forgive you!" he replied, in accents o unutterable tenderness, while holding her in a close embrace; "my darling Ellen! my ill-used child! what have *I* to forgive?"

"Much—very much! I ought to have persevered in trying to make you happy, instead of giving up like a coward! And then as regards Lily, too! I fear I have acted a very deceitful part towards you, in never letting you know who she was."

"You don't mean to tell me that Lily is *your* child?" interrupted Mr. Faversham, with a gesture of extraordinary surprise.

"Yes; has not Henry explained everything to you?" directing a questioning glance towards her husband, who smiled and slightly shook his head.

Mr. Faversham heaved a sigh of intense relief; but so startling and unexpected had been the announcement that he remained for some minutes like one who has suddenly been deprived of the gift of speech. At length he roused himself, and drawing Lily to his side he passed his hand caressingly over the soft golden curls, and remarked in a dreamy, reflective voice, "Then I am

really your grandpapa after all! is not that wonderful?"

"Yes, mamma has just told me about it," replied Lily, with a happy little laugh; "and she says it was very clever of me to call you by your proper name, when I didn't know anything of the kind."

"So it was," gravely assented Mr. Faversham. "I have no doubt," he continued presently, more to himself than his auditors, "that this was the secret of my being so fond of her."

"Indeed, grandpa, I think it is very naughty of you to say that," retorted his youthful relative, with a make-believe pout on her pretty red lips. "Wouldn't you have cared for me at all unless I had been mamma's little girl?"

"Well, perhaps I should, darling, and yet I don't know; from the very first I was struck with *something*, I could not tell *what*, which seemed strangely familiar to me. At every turn I noticed it. Your looks, your manner, but above all your *voice*, appeared but a reflection of what I had seen, and heard, and loved in other days."

"And did you never suspect anything?"

inquired Mrs. Hamilton, over whose changing countenance smiles and tears were struggling for the mastery.

"Never," was the emphatic rejoinder; "though, now that you ask the question, I marvel at my own obtuseness."

"Dear papa! I am so thankful that our little plot succeeded."

"Nay, Ellen, do not make *me* a party to your intrigues," interposed her husband, with feigned alarm. "I neither aided nor abetted you in your questionable proceedings."

"Then I must receive the full meed of praise myself, if you please, papa; for what Henry says is strictly true—he did not assist me in the very least, but seemed, on the contrary, to give me credit for having become slightly deranged!"

"Not quite so bad as that, my love; though I certainly did consider your plan a Quixotic one."

"For which I cannot blame you," said Mr. Faversham, exchanging a friendly glance with his son-in-law; "few would have done otherwise."

At this instant a tap came at the door, and Crossley entered, to say that Colonel Hamilton's horses were growing impatient, and the coachman wished to know whether they should be taken to the stables.

"Of course they should," eagerly assented Mr. Faversham, without allowing the other gentleman an opportunity of replying; "and rooms will be required for my daughter and her husband," he proceeded, with an air of dignity which well became him.

"They are quite ready, sir," promptly responded the housekeeper, while a pleasant smile stole over her stern features.

"You dear old creature!" cried Mrs. Hamilton, going up to her, and addressing her in a tone which brought a flush of gratification to the faded cheeks; "I *love* you now, as much as once I *hated* you; and that is saying a great deal."

"Shall I show you to your room, ma'am?" asked Crossley, demurely, though her eyes were actually glistening with unshed tears; "the dinner will be served almost immediately, and I am sure you must require something after your journey."

"I suppose we may remain, Henry," said the lady, appealing to her husband.

"I think so, dear; your father evidently desires it."

"Desires it!" echoed the Squire, who had drawn near them unperceived; "I do indeed desire it! how could I otherwise assure myself"—he uttered those words in a tone of touching humility—"that the past is, if not *forgotten*, yet at least *forgiven?*"

"Very well, papa, we will stay," was Mrs. Hamilton's consolatory reply.

And, taking Lily by the hand, she went out of the room, and up the broad staircase, accompanied by the woman whom she had formerly regarded with such unmitigated aversion, but who had nevertheless shown herself capable of the most disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"'Tis not in mortals to command success;
But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it."
ADDISON'S "CATO."

"Heaven forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all."
POPE'S "ESSAY ON MAN."

"You have not yet explained how you managed your little plot, my dear," observed Mr. Faversham, when they were sitting together that evening in the pink drawing-room, after Lily had gone to bed.

"It was not much of a plot after all," replied his daughter, with a smile of the fullest contentment as she felt her hand warmly grasped by that of her long-alienated father, and saw his eyes fixed upon her with an expression of unmistakable affection; "but I will tell you how it all came about."

And she proceeded to pour into his willing ear the whole story of her life since she had left the paternal roof so many years before.

But as this part of her narrative, though deeply interesting to those concerned, would not have the same attraction for the generality of my readers, I will pass on to speak of Lily.

She had been born in India, Mrs. Hamilton told him, but soon after entering her third year she appeared so delicate, that the doctors recommended her being removed with all speed from the deleterious influences of so trying a climate.

Accordingly, the Colonel—*then* Major Hamilton—having obtained leave of absence, they lost no time in returning to England.

While there, they resided with Major Hamilton's father (the grandpapa of whom Lily spoke the first night she arrived at Faversham), and the child soon grew strong and healthy, though never robust—delighting every one with her innocent, beguiling ways, as well as astonishing them by the wonderful loveliness of her sweet infantile countenance.

As the time drew near for Major Hamilton to rejoin his regiment, he and his wife held many serious discussions regarding this

little daughter, whom they felt that it would be absolutely necessary for them to leave behind them; but it was not until within a few weeks of their departure that Mrs. Hamilton came to a final decision on the subject. She had no relations to whom she could apply for assistance, neither had Major Hamilton, except his father, whose advanced age and many infirmities rendered him utterly incapable of undertaking such a charge. A *school*, wherever situated, or however conducted, was not to be thought of for an instant; and to various unexceptionable offers made her by private individuals of irreproachable character, the anxious mother had always some lingering objection, which she found herself unable either to define or overcome.

She was one day explaining her difficulties to Sir George Singleton, who happened to be an old friend of her husband's, though she had herself only recently become acquainted with him; and, after a little deliberation, he resolved on writing to his sister-in-law to enlist her sympathies, and ask her whether she would object to receive

Lily into their quiet Vicarage, and bring her up with her own children until such time as Mrs. Hamilton might be able to make some other arrangement for her.

Kind-hearted Mrs. Singleton read the letter, pondered over the glowing description it gave of the young stranger, whom it was thus proposed to introduce into their happy family-circle, and the result was just what Sir George had hoped and intended.

Her motherly feelings prevailed over every other consideration, and she went up to London, full of pity for the poor little child, who was about to be separated from her own parents and consigned to the tender mercies of strangers; and quite prepared to do everything in her power to relieve Mrs. Hamilton's most natural anxiety.

Sir George Singleton welcomed his sister-in-law on her arrival with a smile of satisfaction, and ordering his carriage, he drove off immediately to ask Major and Mrs. Hamilton to meet her that very evening at dinner.

They came, and were introduced; and the good-natured baronet was pleased to see that the two ladies appeared equally charmed

with each other's society. There was no recognition, even by name, for Mr. Singleton had not come into possession of the family living until the death of the old Vicar, which occurred shortly after Ellen had left the Hall; and although *he*, in common with the rest of the neighbourhood, had heard certain floating rumours of the Squire's harshness towards her, and of her dangerous illness and subsequent marriage, the name of her husband had never reached the Vicarage.

Not until the evening was far advanced, therefore, and the ladies were talking confidentially together in the drawing-room, respecting Lily's future home, did Mrs. Hamilton discover *where* that home was to be; and as the revelation suddenly burst upon her, she forgot herself, her husband, her child, *everything*, in the one passionate desire to hear something of her father! But this was a subject on which Mrs. Singleton knew but little, and that little not by any means calculated to cheer or gladden a daughter's heart.

"She had heard that his health was good," this was the only satisfactory piece of

intelligence she could give, "and that he still continued to take a long walk every day and in all weathers;" but how could she answer the various embarrassing questions with which Mrs. Hamilton besieged her, in regard to his manners, habits, and disposition, when she was aware that, so far as outward eye could discern, his condition was more pitiable and wretched than ever? She did her best to soften matters, but she could see by the sad wistfulness with which Ellen received the very meagre information she had it in her power to supply, that she understood only too well what it all meant; and her heart bled for the poor, ill-used daughter, who was thus hungering for a father's love, and yet doomed to obtain nothing but a stone in place of the affection she craved!

"Can you tell me *nothing* in his favour?" pleaded Ellen with feverish eagerness; "is there *no* redeeming feature in his character; not *one* tiny ray, to show that all is not dark, and stern, and forbidding?"

Tears came to Mrs. Singleton's eyes as she marked the thrilling earnestness with which

these words were spoken; and she instituted a very searching inquiry into the chambers of her memory, with the faint hope of being able to recal some circumstance, however trifling, which might afford a pretext for encouraging her to believe that there was even yet a *chance* that good might eventually be found to triumph over the present evil. Her search was not altogether a fruitless one; for, after sitting quite silent for a while, she suddenly bethought herself of a certain little incident, which had been repeated to her by one of her husband's parishioners some time before.

It was simply this. Mr. Faversham had been passing through the village street one day, when he happened to come across a small child, who had tripped over a stone, and lay crying upon the ground. The Squire looked this way and that way, but seeing no one approaching to attend to the wants of the poor little fellow, whose forehead was bleeding from a cut he had received in his fall, he stooped over him, spoke a reassuring word, lifted him from the ground, and actually took out his own pocket-handker-

chief and bound up the slight, but painful, wound! Just as his position was becoming somewhat perplexing, he descried the child's mother hastily running towards him in search of the truant; and when she at length appeared on the scene, it was only to behold Mr. Faversham's tall figure rapidly disappearing in the opposite direction!

Mrs. Singleton would have been surprised could she have foreseen the effect which this apparently insignificant recital would have upon the eager listener at her side. While *she* was speaking, Ellen's vivid imagination had been busy depicting another and far different scene, in which her own little daughter was to be a prominent actor.

As a straw (this is how she reasoned) best shows how the wind blows, so occurrences that are in themselves trifling and unimportant will often furnish a clue to the state of a man's mind; and the simple fact of Mr. Faversham having (thus voluntarily and without premeditation) performed this small act of kindness, was to her a satisfactory proof that some spark of feeling still remained within his dark and desolate heart.

Then she thought of the fascinations of her little Lily; the sweet, guileless simplicity, and merry childish wiles, which rendered her so irresistibly attractive to all who came within reach of her sunny influence; and, like an inspiration, the idea flashed into her mind, that what she had herself laboured so long, and fruitlessly, to accomplish, might yet be effected, by means of her daughter!

Mrs. Singleton shook her head, and looked excessively doubtful and unsatisfied when informed of the wild and (as it appeared to her sober judgment) impracticable scheme which Ellen had thus suddenly devised for bringing about a reconciliation between herself and her father; and Major Hamilton was, if anything, still less sanguine; for though he did not absolutely forbid his wife from carrying her plans into execution, he invariably spoke of them as being "absurd, and visionary, and romantic;" and never for one moment admitted that there was the faintest probability of their ending in aught save vexation and disappointment.

But in spite of obstacles and discourage-

ments, Ellen persevered; and what the results were we already know.

"One thing puzzles me," remarked Mr. Faversham, after he had listened to a lengthened account of all these and many other particulars; "how did you manage to get the child into the house?"

"That was not difficult," returned Mrs. Hamilton quickly. "I brought her myself."

"You brought her?" cried the Squire in surprise.

"Yes; what else could I have done?" was her smiling answer. "I knew your ways better than any one else, and arranged my plans so as to suit them."

She went on to explain that they had come by train from London as far as Claytone (a railway station about ten miles from Eastwicke), and *driven* the rest of the way, choosing a road which took them to one of the side entrances of Mr. Faversham's park, without obliging them to go through the village.

"I found *this* among my possessions," she continued, holding up a small but massive silver key, which opened all the park gates;

"and was able to let myself in unseen. Unseen also I entered the house, just after you had left the dining-room; and it was *my* hand which unfastened the library door, and put Lily inside."

"What did you do then?" asked Mr. Faversham, in a tone of interest.

"Then—must I confess it, papa?—I actually played the spy upon you in your own house!"

"How so? I do not comprehend you, my dear," said Mr. Faversham, with a half-bewildered smile.

"But, indeed, I had no choice," proceeded Ellen, excusingly; "for though I fancied I had laid my plans so well, it turned out that I made one mistake, which might have led to very serious consequences. Not knowing that Crossley was in the habit of going out to dine on New Year's-day, I wrote her a letter which would, I felt sure, induce her to give us her assistance. This letter she ought to have received by that afternoon's post, and I fully expected to find her on the *qui vive* when I reached the house. You may judge, therefore, how intensely disappointed

I was neither to see nor hear anything of her. At first I was in despair; but having gone so far I had no alternative but to proceed. So I coaxed my little darling into the library, and then—where do you think I went myself?"

Mr. Faversham shook his head.

"You could never have found your way into the oak-room?" he asked, incredulously.

"That is precisely what I did," replied Ellen. "I remembered that it had two entrances—*both* by sliding panels—one from the hall, the other from the small library; and I knew that if I could secrete myself there for a short time, I should be able to obtain ocular proof of the style of reception which my little Lily would receive."

"And you saw——" suggested Mr. Faversham, a happy smile quivering over his whole countenance at the remembrance of that unexpected and eventful meeting.

"Yes; by taking up my position on the side nearest the small library, and cautiously slipping back just sufficient of the panel to enable me to observe what was going on

within, I became an eye-witness of the whole proceeding. I noted the expression of your face when you first became conscious of Lily's presence; and then, to my inexpressible relief, I beheld it gradually growing softer and softer, as you listened to her comical little observations, and allowed her to nestle contentedly back in your arms. Soon afterwards I stole out of my hiding-place, and returned to the carriage, gave orders to a confidential servant, who had accompanied me, regarding the child's box; and then hastily retraced my steps to the oak-room, to see what would happen when *that* made its appearance. Not until you had carried Lily upstairs to bed did I desert my post, and drive back to Claytone, where I found my husband anxiously expecting me, and——"

"For the next week you were laid up with a most serious attack of illness," gravely interposed Colonel Hamilton, who had hitherto been a silent, though not uninterested listener to their conversation; "brought on by excessive fatigue and long-continued excitement."

"Never mind that, dear," said his wife, hurriedly, and with a little shudder; "it is over now, and we will not think of it again."

"It was all my fault, darling!" responded the Colonel, laying his hand tenderly upon her bowed head. "I ought to have foreseen these contingencies, and taken measures to prevent your being thus overtaxed."

"It was a labour of love," returned Ellen with renewed energy, "and I shall always be thankful that I had the courage to undertake it."

"Why did you select New Year's-day, Ellen?" inquired Mr. Faversham, dropping his voice almost to a whisper.

"Because I recollected how happy we used to be on those occasions," she answered in the same low, significant tone; "and I fancied you would be feeling dull and lonely."

"And you were right, dear, for I was miserable—absolutely miserable!—none the less so because I happened to be myself unconscious of the fact."

Ellen smiled, a sober, reflective smile. She was thinking of the reason she had

assigned to Lily for leaving her in Mr. Faversham's keeping, and mentally contrasting his past with his present feelings.

"So Crossley was in the plot?" pondered the Squire; "*that* accounts for her extraordinary amiability. How well she kept the secret,—and Mrs. Singleton, too!"

"Yes, I begged them both to be silent until——"

"But supposing, my dear," said Mr. Faversham, with a little hesitation, "that your plan had not succeeded—I mean after you left the house—what would have become of the poor child?"

"In that case Mrs. Singleton was quite prepared to receive her; and in my letter to Crossley I gave her strict injunctions that if Lily showed any signs of being low-spirited, or unhappy, or in the event of *your* not being kind to her, she was to send her at once to the Vicarage."

"I see," answered Mr. Faversham, in a tone of grave emphasis; "but it was a risk, nevertheless—and all for me."

"Indeed, papa! I cannot allow you to give me more credit than I deserve," said

Ellen, earnestly; "it was *not* all for you, a great part of it at least was pure selfishness, so far as I was myself concerned."

Mr. Faversham shook his head dissentingly; and she went on, in a tone of infinite pathos—"I did *so* want to be friends with you, papa; our long estrangement almost broke my heart."

"My child, my dear child!" murmured the old man in a broken voice, as he bent over her, and pressed his lips to her forehead. "How utterly undeserving I have been of such devoted affection."

"And Henry, too," continued Ellen, glancing towards her husband, "although he looks so calm and indifferent, he felt it also —more than I can tell you."

"I was naturally very indignant at seeing my wife slighted," said Colonel Hamilton, answering for himself; "and I will not deny that my personal pride was deeply wounded by your contemptuous rejection of all my advances; but I certainly cannot lay claim to any other or more sentimental feeling on the subject."

He spoke coldly, almost haughtily; and

as Mr. Faversham marked his proud, erect bearing, and the involuntary flashing of his eye, he thought he could understand how great an effort it had cost him to be there at all.

After a momentary pause the Squire rose from his seat, and going up to his independent son-in-law, said meaningly—"Dare I ask you to forget the past?"

"One part of it, at least, I hope I shall *never* forget," replied Colonel Hamilton, softening in an instant, as he met the other's outstretched hand, and comprehended the tone of apology.

"He means your kindness to Lily," explained Mrs. Hamilton, casting a grateful look on her husband.

"I do, indeed," he answered, in accents of unaffected sincerity; "she appears to me everything that the most fastidious parent could desire; and this is, of course, greatly owing to the excellent training she has received at your hands."

"I think it is Lily who has had the training of *me*, and not *I* of her!" was Mr. Faversham's significant rejoinder. "My only trouble now

is," he continued, in rather an agitated voice, and gazing wistfully from one to the other as he spoke, "whether you may not consider it expedient to separate us, after all."

"For my part, papa, I consider that you have the best right to her," returned his daughter encouragingly. "Still, we must see something of her too, as we should not wish her to forget her own parents, you know."

"There's not the slightest fear of that, my dear," exclaimed the Squire, in undisguised anxiety; "only fancy! she positively recognised her father the first moment she saw him."

"This is easily accounted for," said Mrs. Hamilton, with an amused smile. "I put his portrait into Lily's box; and lest she should at any time forget *whose* likeness it was, I had the word 'PAPA' printed in large gold letters outside the morocco cover. She tells me that Crossley kept it for her, but allowed her to look at it so frequently, that directly she saw the original she knew who he was."

"Talking of pictures," observed Mr.

Faversham, in a meditative tone, "reminds me that on one occasion Lily declared she had met with *your* likeness somewhere about the house; though when I went with her to look at it, it had disappeared! At the time I was inclined to adopt Crossley's suggestion that the child may have been mistaken, but I begin now to suspect that she was right."

"Very likely," assented Ellen, whose eye had involuntarily turned towards the empty space which had formerly been occupied by her own portrait; "it always used to hang *there*, but was probably removed by Crossley, for fear Lily should recognise it."

Mr. Faversham heaved a sigh of relief. It was so pleasant for him to accept this interpretation of the case, instead of believing, as he had hitherto done, that it had been taken down by *his* orders.

The following morning he received abundant evidence of the correctness of Mrs. Hamilton's conjecture; for just as they had risen from the breakfast-table, Lily, who had left the room a few seconds previously, for the purpose of conveying some dainty morsel to One-eye, came rushing back with

an air of great excitement, and seizing Mr. Faversham's hand, forced him to accompany her to the pink drawing-room.

"Look at that!" she exclaimed, triumphantly pointing to the large oil-painting, which was now re-instated in its old position. "I always said I had seen mamma—*and there she is!*"

"For the *future*, you may take as much notice of her as you like," replied Crossley, who had been superintending its replacement, and was now examining it with a critical eye, to make sure that no speck of dust was lingering about its frame; "but at the time you first discovered her, she was living as it were *incog.*, and did not wish to be recognised."

With this facetious remark the smiling housekeeper stepped back, to enable Colonel Hamilton to obtain an uninterrupted view of it.

"It is certainly an excellent likeness," he observed to Mr. Faversham; "I do not wonder that Lily was struck with it."

Neither did the Squire, nor Crossley, nor the solemn-featured footman, who stole a

covert glance at Mrs. Hamilton as he was in the act of leaving the room, after having assisted to hang her portrait on the wall; nor the daring Eliza (still belonging to the Faversham household, notwithstanding her oft-reiterated threats that she would leave it), who, instead of discreetly withdrawing, in obedience to an imperious gesture from Crossley, came unhesitatingly forward, duster in hand, and said in a tone of great interest—"I told Miss Lily that she would be sure to see it again some time, ma'am."

"Did you, indeed?" rejoined Mrs. Hamilton, turning round in no little astonishment, on finding herself thus unceremoniously addressed. In an instant she had deciphered the girl's character—vain, reckless, and headstrong; and yet faithful, affectionate, and good-natured. And as she passed on from the mental survey of her faults—so clearly evidenced by the flippant and self-satisfied manner, the unbecoming attire, and showy ornaments, so utterly unbefitting a person in her walk in life—to observe the more pleasing traits of her disposition, as exhibited

in her frank, ingenuous countenance, the lady's soft serious eyes relented, and she smiled, a gentle kindly smile, while adding, in a tone of exceeding sweetness—"Then your words have really come true."

The smile and tone together had the effect of bringing a sudden flush of pleasure to Eliza's cheek; but she was too shrewd and quick-witted not to have perceived that Mrs. Hamilton's first impression of her had not been a favourable one; and, as she instinctively felt that it would be well worth making an effort to obtain that lady's approbation, she puzzled her brain to find out what it was to which she objected.

She would probably have continued still ignorant on this point, however; but just as she was quitting the apartment, she heard Mrs. Hamilton say, in answer to some disparaging remark which Crossley made regarding her—"You mustn't be too hard upon her, Crossley. She only wants training. I like her face immensely, it looks so truthful and honest; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, she will make a faithful and attached servant; but she must learn how to

dress properly, for at present she is not fit to be seen."

Poor Eliza! *She* who prided herself upon her good taste in dress; who took such infinite pains to imitate the fashions of those above her, and had even taken the trouble that very morning to put on her best afternoon costume, in honour of her new arrivals —to think that *she* should be accused of not knowing how to dress! and actually be pronounced—*unfit to be seen!*

Her first impulse was to get into a passion; her second to seek the privacy of her bedroom, where she at once gave vent to her feelings in a flood of indignant tears.

But as she gradually grew calmer, she was able to muse over Mrs. Hamilton's words without anger; and when she finally proceeded to contrast her own gay attire with the lady's far more sober-coloured clothing, she could no longer deny that there was some truth, at least, in the singular charge which had been thus indirectly brought against her.

CHAPTER XXV.

"He knows when most His gifts will bless us;
The seed-times of our joys and pains;
And when no faithless fears possess us,
Nor pride born of our earthly gains:
Then will our God reveal His face,
And cheer us with His heavenly grace.

"Fountain of mercy! whose pervading eye
Can look within and read what passes there,
Accept my thoughts for thanks; I have no words.
My soul o'erfraught with gratitude rejects
The aid of language—Lord, behold my heart."

THE next few days passed away like a delicious dream.

There was one drawback, and only one, to Mr. Faversham's happiness: he could not reconcile himself to the idea of so soon being called upon to give up his newly-recovered daughter; and, in spite of her assurances that the visit should be often repeated, and the generous promise she made that she would send Lily back to him after allowing her to spend a short time with her little brothers and sister (whom she had never yet

seen), it was quite evident that something more was wanting to enable the old man to enter with any degree of heartiness into their plans.

As the time approached for their departure, he grew restless and uneasy, and began to shut himself into his library, for the purpose of looking over and trying to arrange his papers. But finding this no easy task, owing to their having been permitted to accumulate during many years of neglect and confusion, he at length called in the assistance of Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton; and, with some hesitation, and many doubts and fears, unfolded his wishes.

He explained, in earnest, pathetic language, how desolate he should feel when they had left him, and then went on to say that, after seriously considering the subject, he had come to the conclusion that it would be unpardonable selfishness on his part were he to take advantage of their offer, and separate Lily from the society of her nearest relations.

"But I fear you will miss her very much, papa," said Ellen, in a tone of great anxiety,

for she had had opportunities of watching them both, and knew that his heart was bound up in that of the child.

"Miss her!" reiterated Mr. Faversham, with sudden energy; "ah! that I shall! But I have been thinking," he continued, in a low, hurried tone, "whether we could not come to some other arrangement, my dear."

He looked eagerly at her, and then at her husband; but they did not yet comprehend his meaning, and he found himself obliged to proceed.

"If Lily were to remain at Faversham, and *you* reside elsewhere, I know what the result would be—she would be always thinking of you, and wishing to see you, and—in short, she would not be happy."

"And how do you propose to obviate this difficulty?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, who had herself entertained similar doubts, though she did not like to bring them forward.

"Could we not *all* live at Faversham?" suggested her father, in a voice of suppressed excitement; "the house is large enough for half-a-dozen families; and as long as I live"—here he looked at the

Colonel with the most beseeching expression of countenance—"you shall have it all your own way. You can have your own private apartments," he went on rapidly, as if afraid of a refusal, "which I would never enter without your permission—and——"

"But the children, papa?" debated Ellen; "you might find them a nuisance."

"Did I find Lily a nuisance?" was the reproachful response.

"No, but these are not so quiet as she was, besides being younger, and of course more troublesome. However, this objection might be got over, perhaps—what do you say, Henry?"

"You could still, if you wish it, spend some months every year in London," continued Mr. Faversham, without giving his son-in-law time to reply, "as my intention is to purchase a suitable residence for you in Grosvenor Square. I am aware that you have a house of your own," he added quickly, seeing the Colonel about to speak, "but Ellen does not like the situation, and I am not sure that you are particularly partial to it yourself."

"It certainly *is* dull," he answered rather reluctantly; "but it has belonged to my family so long, and my dear father was so attached to it, that I scarcely like the idea of giving it up."

"Well, all these things can be settled afterwards," was Mr. Faversham's cautious rejoinder; "in the meantime, may I hope that you will consider my proposal?"

"I do not see that it requires much consideration," gravely returned Colonel Hamilton; "if you are really satisfied that our remaining here will be conducive to your comfort or happiness, we shall, I am sure, feel it a pleasure to stay—don't you agree with me, Ellen?"

"Oh, yes, it will be perfectly delightful!" she exclaimed, in accents of joyful assent; "I never dreamt of such a thing before. You dear, good papa, to contrive such a nice plan for us! I really believe it will answer admirably."

"My darling Ellen, I cannot tell you how relieved I am to hear you say so; and as for your husband"—turning with glistening eyes towards his son-in-law—"I owe him

more than I can express for thus readily agreeing to my proposal, instead of placing obstacles in the way, which he might easily have done had he been so disposed."

"I am inclined to imagine that the advantage is all on our side," remarked the Colonel, with one of those rare smiles which softened his whole countenance; "Ellen will naturally feel more at home *here* than anywhere else; and as far as *I* am concerned, I should like nothing better than to pass the greater part of the year in this lovely spot."

"Ah! how I wish——" eagerly began Mr. Faversham, and then he checked himself and stopped short, while a deep red flush mounted to his very forehead, and then subsided, leaving him whiter than before; but ere Ellen could ask him what was the matter, or even form a conjecture as to the cause of his agitation, he had shaken it off, and proceeded in a far calmer tone, "I was about to give utterance to a very foolish regret, and wish that this estate was not entailed. But it is at all events yours until my death; and when *that* happens, I must be content to know that, though I cannot have the satisfaction

of leaving my daughter in possession of Faversham itself, yet she will nevertheless receive a very considerable fortune; as all my other property (with the exception of a handsome provision for my little Lily) will of course be settled on *her*. You will scarcely believe me," continued the old man, with a slightly annoyed air, "but up to this moment I am positively unacquainted with even the name of the future Squire of Faversham. The fact is, we have so few relations, and those such distant ones, with whom I have been in the habit of holding no manner of communication, that I now find the greatest difficulty in tracing out my next heir. I have been looking over these"—pointing to the heaps of documents which were strewed over the table—"but to no purpose; so I suppose I had better apply to a professional man, if I really wish to be enlightened on the subject."

While he was speaking, Ellen and her husband had been regarding one another with a curious look of blended amusement and consciousness; and when he at length came to a conclusion, and waited for a reply,

Colonel Hamilton moved his chair nearer to that of his father-in-law, and said, in a low but distinct voice, "I think it will be unnecessary for you to take that trouble; for" —exchanging another telegraphic signal with his wife—"I fancy I know to whom the Faversham estate will eventually come."

"Do you, indeed?" cried the Squire, gazing at him in some amazement.

"If I understand you aright, you would like to keep it in the family?" was Colonel Hamilton's apparently irrelevant response.

"Like!" echoed Mr. Faversham, and there was the slightest possible ring of exasperation in his tone; "what is the use of reminding me of what I should like? it is absurd to talk of that!"

"Not quite," replied the other, quietly, and almost deferentially, "since your daughter's husband happens to be the heir; and after him comes your own grandson!"

"What is that you say?" demanded the old man, in a short, gasping voice. "You should have learnt before this," he went on reprovingly, "that these kind of jests do no good, but rather harm: old wounds some-

times reopen, you know!" and with a sickly smile he lay back in his chair.

"He is not jesting, dearest papa," cried Ellen, leaning over him, and taking his unresisting hand in both her own; "I assure you it is true!—I have known it for years."

"Do you really mean, in all sincerity, to assure me that *you* are my heir?" queried Mr. Faversham, slowly and falteringly, as he recovered from his momentary emotion, and once more assumed an erect position, while fixing his eyes with an expression of concentrated anxiety upon Colonel Hamilton's face.

"Yes, it is even so!" came the reply, uttered in accents of peculiar seriousness.

"Then why—oh, why was I not informed of this at the time of your marriage?"

"You must remember that my father was then alive," replied the Colonel; "still, I have some indistinct impression that I *did* make an incidental allusion to the fact, when I wrote to ask your daughter's hand."

"Alas! I tore that letter up before I had read it half through," returned Mr. Faversham, in a tone of self-accusation.

"I thought that very probable," was the simple reply.

"But since then, my dear," glancing inquiringly at Ellen, "how is it that you never reminded me of this important circumstance? You might have guessed that it would be a subject of great interest to me."

"It was my pride which prevented her from mentioning it to you," said the Colonel, with a humorous gleam in his eye; "she often tells me that pride is my besetting sin, and I shall certainly conclude that she is right," he added pleasantly, "if I find that it has been the means of depriving you of any satisfaction which you might otherwise have——"

"Nay! *you* are not to blame," hastily interrupted Mr. Faversham; "from first to last you have acted with amazing forbearance towards me."

"And, papa dear! it was *not* altogether pride," observed Ellen, whose eyes were resting with an expression of loving approval upon the handsome and intelligent countenance of her husband. "I have heard him repeatedly say that if he could only be sure

that the information would not have a contrary effect upon you to that which we wished, he would be the very first to tell you how he was situated."

"Some people entertain a strange kind of prejudice with regard to their heirs," explained the Colonel, seeing that Mr. Faversham's face had assumed a somewhat puzzled look, "especially if these happen to be only distantly related to themselves."

"Yes, that is quite true; but this could not have applied to you—my own daughter's husband."

"I am glad you are satisfied," rejoined Colonel Hamilton, with an air of the utmost gratification.

"I am more than satisfied!" replied the old man, warmly; "I feel that my cup of happiness is full, even to overflowing. Truly God delighteth in mercy! He leads the blind by a way they know not, and when the road seems darkest and most difficult, His aid is ever the nearest."

He paused; but, after a few moments of meditative silence, resumed the conversation by saying regretfully, "I shall, of

course, always blame myself for causing others to suffer through my misdeeds."

"Do not vex yourself about that, papa," said Ellen, thoughtfully, "for it appears to me that everything has turned out for the best. But for my illness," she continued, with a sort of quaint summing up of the case, "I might never have seen Henry; and then I am perfectly sure my life would not have been half as bright or happy as it now is. And even if I *had* met him, and married him, under other and more favourable circumstances, it would have been utterly impossible for me to have understood the depth and generosity of his character, or to be really certain that he did not like my fortune better than myself! because, you know, papa dear," she hurried on, in spite of the remonstrances of her husband, who appeared anything but comfortable while listening to his own praises, "he never had the slightest expectation of receiving anything from you. Indeed, there seemed at one time so little prospect of our ever being reconciled, that——"

"Now, Ellen darling, you are talking

positive nonsense," earnestly objected the Colonel.

"If *you* do not understand what I mean, papa *does*," was the laughing retort. "However, I will say no more on the subject; I merely wanted to remind *him* that our very sorest trials often prove blessings in disguise!"

"Yes, good does indeed sometimes spring out of evil, as I can from my own experience testify," responded Mr. Faversham, with a meaning smile; "for if I had not shown myself the most heartless and unnatural of parents, I should never perhaps have fully realised how excellent and loving a daughter I possessed."

"I think," said Ellen, rising from her seat and preparing to leave the room, "I will run away, papa, before I am *quite* spoilt by your flattery, and tell Lily about our plans—she will be so delighted! and that good Madame Montague, too! what a help she will be to me with the other children, when they grow old enough to profit by her instructions!"

After the lady's departure Mr. Faversham and his son-in-law had a long and satisfac-

tory consultation on business matters—the musty parchments were consigned to their original places of safety; and the Squire's mind being thus entirely relieved from all care or anxiety, in regard to the future proprietor of the fair and stately domain, which had for so many generations descended from father to son, he was able to converse with ease and pleasure; and quite won Colonel Hamilton's heart by the kind and feeling manner in which he alluded to the disclosure which had so lately been made him, and expressed his unbounded gratification at the result of their deliberations.

"We shall get on very well together, my dear."

This was the concise but emphatic assurance which the Colonel gave his wife, when he snatched a few minutes' private conversation with her that evening, previous to stepping into his carriage *en route* for London.

The children and their nurses had been left in his own town house, whither himself and Ellen had intended to join them the following day; but in consequence of this sudden change in their plans, it was decided that

she should remain at Faversham, while her husband took his journey alone, returning as soon as possible with the rest of the party.

Until this event happened, Lily continued in a state of the greatest excitement. It was quite useless for Madame Montague to suggest that the time would probably pass quicker, if she were to resume some of her favourite studies—the expectant child could not fix her thoughts upon any other subject for more than two consecutive moments, so occupied were they with the small brothers, and still smaller sister, to whom she was so soon to be introduced, and for whose accommodation the long-deserted nurseries (which were separated from the rest of the mansion by solid oaken double-doors, covered with thick tapestry) were being so carefully prepared under Crossley's active superintendence, aided by an occasional suggestion from Mrs. Hamilton.

And Lily's excitement was shared in no small degree by Mr. Faversham himself! He watched his daughter's every movement, with an air which seemed to imply that he had suddenly become possessed of some

priceless treasure, which he feared to lose sight of even for a single moment; and he followed her from room to room, entering with eager interest into all her plans, and himself proposing various improvements and alterations, which might, he fancied, conduce either to her own comfort, or that of the children.

Lily's patience was sorely tried; for Colonel Hamilton remained in London some days longer than he had anticipated —Mr. Faversham having charged him with certain extensive commissions, which it took him some time to get through. Among the rest, he had to give orders regarding the refurnishing and embellishment of several of the principal apartments at the Hall; and also to fulfil a promise he had very reluctantly made, of going over the house in Grosvenor Square (for which Mr. Faversham was in treaty), to see whether it was one that Ellen would be likely to approve of.

"You need not give up your house in Harley Street," the Squire had said, by way of silencing his objections; "I dare

say it may do for one of the boys by-and-by."

And though the Colonel smiled as he thought of the respective ages of his two sons, he saw that it would only prove a source of annoyance to Mr. Faversham were he to offer any further resistance to his wishes.

It was night when the little travellers at length made their welcome appearance at the Hall; and they were then so tired and sleepy that the introduction between themselves and their grandpapa had to be deferred until the following day.

Lily, however, was admitted to the nursery, to make acquaintance with them while they were being undressed; but after admiring them for a while in silence, and kissing each of their drowsy faces, she returned to her bedroom, and proceeded to give an animated description of them to her still constant attendant *Mary*, whose fears lest her services might not be required after the arrival of Mrs. Hamilton's own servants had been speedily dispelled by that lady taking an early opportunity of expressing

her perfect satisfaction with the manner in which she had hitherto conducted herself towards her young mistress, and assuring her that she should still retain her present situation as Lily's maid.

The next morning, soon after breakfast, the new comers were brought into the library to be presented to Mr. Faversham.

First came the youngest, little Ellen Mertoun (all the children were called Mertoun, after the Colonel's mother), rather more than a year old; then her brother Henry, aged two years and a half; and last, but not least in Mr. Faversham's opinion, came the heir —a handsome boy of four. Such a manly, independent little fellow he looked, as he was led into the room—apparently much against his will, for there was a very decided frown upon his forehead, and a sort of protest in his speaking eyes. However, he walked forward peaceably enough; but when his mamma stooped down and lifted him upon Mr. Faversham's knee, and he caught the fixed, eager gaze with which the old man regarded him, he began to rebel.

"What you 'tare at me like that for?" he

demanded, in a half-conscious, half-defiant tone; "I haven't been naughty!"

"There is something very suspicious in that speech," remarked Mrs. Hamilton to her husband. "I greatly fear he *has* been naughty. What has Alfred been doing, Mason?" turning anxiously towards the head nurse.

"I am sorry to say he has broken the young lady's doll, ma'am," replied Mason, who appeared very much distressed.

"Not my Polly—oh, not my Polly!" cried Lily, putting her two hands together, and feeling at that moment as if her discarded favourite was dearer than ever to her.

"She was just *stewpid*," emphasised Alfred, with the greatest contempt; "if she *could* see and walk, like nurse *said* she could"—darting a reproachful glance at Mason—"why didn't she go away when I told her I would c'ack her head if she stayed where she was?"

"I do not yet understand what he has done," said Mrs. Hamilton, with a slightly bewildered air.

"It was the new hammer, ma'am," explained the nurse, in a low, hurried tone.

"The new hammer!" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, more mystified than ever.

"His papa bought him one in London, and he was so delighted with it that he could not resist the temptation of using it whenever he had an opportunity."

"But where did he find the doll?" inquired the lady.

"Miss Hamilton brought it into the nursery this morning, intending to show it to her little sister, but as she was asleep at the time she left it there, saying she would come back again after breakfast."

"I wasn't *reelly* naughty, though," retorted the culprit, looking around him with an air of bravado; "I *told* her I would c'ack her head—and I did it!"

The words were spoken boldly and triumphantly; but there was an undercurrent of shame, which spoke volumes to the ear of the mother.

"Did you really crack my poor Polly's head open with your hammer!" gasped out

Lily, whose blue eyes had expanded in horror and dismay.

Alfred nodded, but he grew manifestly uneasy as he observed the strange expression of her countenance.

A passion of tears was Lily's only response. She had been so intensely happy that morning at the idea of making over her Polly, with all its extensive wardrobe and other belongings, to her young sister; and now she shuddered, and became sick at heart as she thought of its mutilated condition.

Mrs. Hamilton endeavoured to comfort her by telling her that she still had the address of the person from whom she originally purchased it, and would write to him that very evening, and ask him to procure her another; but Lily only shook her head, she could not as yet derive any consolation from the assurance that her ill-starred favourite would soon be replaced by a successor.

When Mr. Faversham first realised the astounding fact that Lily's doll had been tampered with, and that *she*—his own

cherished darling—was actually *crying*, he gazed about him in absolute bewilderment; then, almost without knowing what he did, he placed the little Alfred on the ground, and, rising to his own feet, made a movement as if he would have gone over to her. But, suddenly checking himself, he sat back in his chair, and contented himself with watching her with a grave, concerned face, and eyes that had unconsciously become tender and sympathetic.

As for the author of all this evil, he stood for the space of a few seconds surprised and puzzled beyond measure. As long as he had been scolded and found fault with he was on his dignity, refusing to express the least compunction for the mischief he had wrought, or even to admit that he had done wrong at all, and when he came into the presence of his parents he had boldly pursued the same course; but directly he comprehended the cause of Lily's grief he seemed to undergo a complete transformation, for as the nurse approached him to lead him out of the room, he exclaimed impulsively—"Let me go to my Sissy! she's crying!"

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She was rather afraid lest Lily might not be able just then to appreciate the feeling which had led him to offer her this hammer, which, being the newest of his possessions, was of course, in his estimation, by far the most valuable.

But Lily never thought of *refusing* the proffered gift—she could read his motives quite well, and saw that he would not be satisfied unless permitted to make up in some way for the vexation he had occasioned her; and when he soon afterwards followed up his generous proposal by expressing his intention of going at once to fetch the toys he had promised her from the nursery, she instantly offered to accompany him.

"Is the doll very much injured?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton of the nurse, in a low-breathed aside, as Lily and Alfred were crossing the room together.

"Its head is completely shattered, ma'am," answered Mason, regretfully.

"Then do not on any account allow Mrs. Hamilton to look at it!" rejoined the

And before the astonished Mason could divine his intention he had snatched his hand from her grasp, and struggled away from her. Then, rushing over to Lily, he clambered into her lap, and throwing his arms about her neck, pressed his soft dimpled cheek to her own, and sobbed out in a voice of penitence, "Don't cry, Sissy! Alfy's *not* glad, he's reelly sorry! and I won't never c'ack her head no more! And I'll give you my Noah's Ark, and my rabbits; and—and—yes, I *will*,"—in a resolved voice, like one who is bent on making some great and unheard-of sacrifice—"I'll give you my hammer!"

There were actually tears in the bright eyes, and the rosy lip was quivering with excitement.

"Never mind, dear," said Lily, hugging the little fellow closely in her arms, and dashing away her own tears; "I'm sure you didn't mean to hurt my Polly."

"But you shall have Alfy's hammer," he persisted, with such unmistakable earnestness that Mrs. Hamilton *whispered* to her daughter, "You had better take it, dear, or

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some way for the pleasure it had given
her; and when he came afterward to wish
up his sweetest prayer, by expressing the
intention of some day, when I should be
he had promised her for the future,
instantly offered a counter-gift.

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quired Mr. Ingram, in a low, confidential
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"Yes,
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"Then do not on any account allow Miss Hamilton to look at it!" rejoined the lady,

and she pointed significantly towards the door.

Almost before the words were spoken the quick-witted servant had left the room. Swiftly she ascended the broad staircase, and traversed the oak-floored passages, until she reached the tapestried doors, and entered what was to be from henceforth her own peculiar territory. First, she directed a searching glance around the spacious day-nursery, with its large oriel windows, heavy Turkish carpet, comfortable sofas, and chairs of almost every size and shape; but she could see nothing of the unfortunate Polly, whose remains she had left lying upon one of the side-tables. Then she visited in turn each of the children's sleeping-rooms, but with no better success; and she was just going in quest of the second nurse, to ask her whether *she* could in any way account for its disappearance, when she was suddenly joined by Mary, who hurriedly informed her that, on hearing of the catastrophe, she had herself taken the precaution of removing every trace of it from the apartment.

She had scarcely finished her brief explanations when Lily and Alfred made their *entrée*—the latter all eagerness to produce his cherished treasures for Lily's inspection; while she, trying hard to forget her own disappointment, feigned an interest in them which she could, under the circumstances, be hardly expected to feel.

"I warned you, papa, dear, that you would not find the other children as good as Lily," observed Mrs. Hamilton, turning with the slightest possible shade of anxiety to her father, as the library door closed upon the two children.

"If you will allow me to offer my opinion on the subject," remarked Madame Montague, who was of the party, "I should say that you have no reason whatever to be dissatisfied with the child. I watched him narrowly during the whole proceeding, and was quite struck with his frank-heartedness and generosity. The mere breaking of the doll," she continued, in a slow, thoughtful tone, "was in itself nothing, as it evidently arose from some misunderstanding between himself and his nurse as to its capabilities."

"What is he called?" demanded Mr. Faversham, somewhat abruptly.

"Alfred Ernest Faversham," replied Ellen, in a soft, gentle voice.

"My son's name!" murmured the old man, glancing at her with an expression of gratified surprise.

"It was a whim of mine," explained his daughter. "From his very birth I fancied I could detect a strong resemblance to our lost Alfred, though it is quite possible," she added, musingly, "that it may have been only the force of imagination."

"Not at all," exclaimed Mr. Faversham, quickly; "it was no caprice of fancy, for in my life I never saw a stronger likeness—as you will, I am sure, admit if you look at this."

And, rising hastily from his seat, he opened one of the drawers of his writing-table, and took out an ivory miniature of his son, when quite a child.

After glancing at it for a moment, Ellen handed it with a smile to her husband.

"He resembles him in disposition, too," continued the Squire, drawing nearer to his

daughter, and addressing her in an eager, confidential tone, as he observed that Colonel Hamilton and Madame Montague were both examining the miniature with an air of great interest; "do you remember how hasty he was, and yet how affectionate?—how utterly impossible it was to *coerce* him into doing right (so impatient was he of control), though a word or look of kindness never failed in producing the desired effect; do you remember this, my dear?"

Yes, Ellen remembered it well! and she also recalled, with a strange thrill of tender emotion, the wise and loving training he had received at the hands of their saintly mother; and, as she reflected upon the untiring patience with which that mother had striven to overcome his faults, while carefully cherishing all that was good, and noble, and right, in his character, she breathed an earnest and heartfelt prayer, that *she* might in like manner be successful in teaching *her* son to distinguish truth from error; to hate the evil and love the good!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The truly generous is the truly wise;
And he who loves not others lives unblest."

HUME'S "DOUGLAS."

"From that day forth, in peace and joyous blis,
They liv'd together long without debate;
Ne private jarre, ne spite of enemis,
Could shake the safe assurance of their state."

"FAERY QUEENE."

BEFORE bidding a final adieu to our friends at Faversham, we will, with the reader's permission, pay them one more visit, to see how it has fared with them since Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton made their unexpected appearance, some ten years previously.

It is again the 1st of January—bright, cold, and clear—and as we pass through the village of Eastwicke, on our way to the Hall, our eye is greeted by the same festive preparations which we noticed on a former occasion. This time, however, everything seems on a larger scale. Men, and women,

and children are congregated together in all directions, clad in their holiday attire, and wearing a general look of expectancy upon their happy faces; and when we stop, and ask our old acquaintance, Nelson (who had just stepped out of his ivy-arched doorway, followed by his patient wife and well-behaved children), what it all means, he points with a certain air of importance to a large, new building, which stands midway down the street, and condescendingly informs us that it has recently been erected by Squire Faversham, and presented to the villagers as a lecture-hall, connected with which are a reading-room, free library, and class-rooms for such of the community as felt disposed to avail themselves of the means thus liberally offered them of self-improvement.

"The Hall is just about to be opened," pursues our obliging informant; "and, after a few speeches have been delivered, there is to be a grand New Year's dinner—to which we have all received invitations—in honour of the event. The new Vicar is expected to arrive in time——"

"The new Vicar!" we exclaim, in no

little astonishment—"what has become of Mr. Singleton?"

"Oh, he's not *Mr.* Singleton now! He succeeded to the Baronetcy on the death of his brother some time ago, and has left Eastwicke altogether?"

"And where does he at present reside?"

"In London—that is to say, he has a house there; but I'm told that he spends most of his time abroad. One of his daughters —Miss Amy, perhaps you may have heard the name?—has grown up rather delicate; and so the doctors ordered her to try the effect of a warmer climate. If it had not been for *this*, I don't believe Sir Arthur would have gone away from us, for he was very much attached to Eastwicke, and often said he would like to end his days here."

"And what sort of a man is this new Vicar?"

"Why ——" But at this instant the doors of the lecture-hall are suddenly thrown wide open, and our communicative companion, seeing his neighbours pressing eagerly forward to take their seats, and being by no means desirous of losing his own

chance of securing a good place, politely invites us to accompany him into the building.

"What an immense place!" is our first reflection, on entering the large and lofty edifice; "How exquisitely beautiful!" our next, as we gaze around us upon the elegant floral decorations and devices—the stained glass windows, marble pillars, statues, and pictures.

"Yes," observes Nelson, rightly interpreting our thoughts; "when Squire Faversham does a thing, he always does it well!"

And, having given utterance to this sententious remark, the loquacious beadle looks about him with the same complacency as though *he* had been the originator and contriver of everything.

"An organ, too," we unconsciously exclaim, as our roving eye lights upon a magnificent instrument occupying a kind of grottoed elevation far above our heads.

"Ah, yes," responds Nelson, in rather an indifferent tone, for his attention is attracted by a sudden stir at the principal entrance, "we are to have a musical entertainment

this evening—some celebrated foreign professor having engaged to open the new organ."

All at once there is a profound hush, instantly succeeded by the simultaneous rising of the goodly assemblage to their feet, while a loud ringing cheer burst from their lips, as a venerable-looking man (whom we have no difficulty in recognising as Mr. Faversham, although his silvery locks have grown still whiter, and his tall, erect figure is slightly bent with the weight of years) comes slowly up the centre of the building, leaning upon the arm of his dignified son-in-law.

Several other gentlemen follow in their train; and, just as they take up their respective positions on the platform, and are about to commence the proceedings, the audience once more rise, to welcome a group of ladies, among whom is the not-to-be-mistaken face of Mrs. Hamilton; though it is not easy to believe that the young lady who accompanies her *can*, by any possibility, be the same whom we have been accustomed to know under the name of Lily. And yet it is undoubtedly herself—passed from fragile

girlhood into the fuller beauty of a lovely woman.

She is rather tall than short; her figure slight, and graceful in its every motion; her hair no longer floats like shimmering gold around her, but is gathered up in some simple, yet stately and becoming, fashion about her well-shaped head. As for her countenance, it defies description! so fair, and sweet, and lovable is it, with its small regular features; its delicately-tinted complexion; its deep, and changeful, violet-blue eyes—now soft, now arch, now pitiful, now tender, or affectionate, or sympathetic in their expression—and the witching smile, which sparkles over lip and brow, speaking of that inner sunshine which has its "seat and centre in the heart."

But Mr. Faversham has risen to address the meeting; and as he comes forward to the front of the platform, and begins his speech, the attentive audience maintain a reverential silence, and earnestly await each word which falls from his aged lips. He says but little, however; for, as he himself reminds us, his forte does not consist in

public speaking; and he is, moreover, unequal to any long-continued exertion—but that little is to the purpose. First, he alludes with unfeigned regret to the unavoidable absence of their new Vicar, who had fully intended to arrive at Eastwicke by the mid-day train, so as to be in time for the present meeting; but, in consequence of his having at the last moment met with some unexpected detention, he had been reluctantly obliged to abandon the idea; then he proceeds to explain his reasons for wishing to see the inhabitants of Eastwicke and the adjacent hamlets provided with those opportunities of self-culture and improvement, which are generally considered so essential to one's mental and moral advancement; and after adverting briefly and incidentally to the steps he had taken for securing them these advantages (not only by the erection of the building itself, but also by engaging various eminent men to deliver, for their benefit, lectures on every subject likely to prove interesting or instructive, no less than by the carefully-selected library; the class-rooms, well furnished with maps, and other useful

implements, and having besides the additional recommendation of being under the efficient superintendence of a resident librarian, whose varied acquirements must render him invaluable to such of them as might desire to spend some of their leisure hours in the pursuit of knowledge), the old gentleman concludes with a few words of kindly exhortation and encouragement, and then resumes his former seat amidst the loud and prolonged applause of the assembled villagers.

Several other speeches follow; but at length all is over; and Mr. Faversham and his party have re-entered their carriages, and driven away in the direction of the Hall, leaving the invited guests to regale themselves, after their own fashion, at the really sumptuous repast which has been prepared for them, under the able supervision of a far-famed London purveyor.

* * * * *

"I hope you have not over-exerted yourself, papa?" said Mrs. Hamilton, looking somewhat wistfully at the old Squire, as he leaned back in the carriage, and partially closed his eyes.

"Not at all, my dear," he answered, rousing himself at the sound of her voice, and regarding her with a beaming smile—"I have quite enjoyed it."

"It was certainly very interesting," remarked Mrs. Welford, a great friend of Ellen's, who was returning with her husband and a few other visitors to take luncheon at the Hall.

"You will not, of course, *think* of going out again to-day?" continued the anxious daughter, in a half-questioning, half-coaxing tone.

"We shall see," was the slightly hesitating response. "To tell you the truth, I feel almost as eager as any of you to have an opportunity of hearing this musical genius, of whose brilliant performances every one seems to be speaking."

"Rather than disappoint you, we would do our utmost to persuade him to come to you at Faversham——"

"That would not be the same thing at all," quickly interposed her father. "I should like above all things to be present at the opening of the organ, not only for the

sake of listening to so skilful a player, but also that I may be able to judge for myself as to whether the instrument is likely to prove as valuable as was represented to us."

Ellen shook her head; but ere she could venture on any further remonstrance, the carriage had drawn close up to the broad flight of steps leading to the house, and they found themselves surrounded by the friends who had preceded them from the village.

"Is anything the matter, mamma?" asked Lily, in a low tone, as she detected the slight cloud upon Mrs. Hamilton's usually placid brow.

"I am troubled about your grandpapa," she replied, in an equally suppressed voice. "He has set his heart upon going down to the village to-night."

"Would it do him any harm?" debated Lily, assuming a serious air.

"Well, I am afraid it might, dear. You know he *never* goes out in the evenings, and it will be bitterly cold to-night."

"But we could wrap him up well," sug-

gested the young lady, "and shut the carriage windows."

"It is not the mere drive there and back that I object to, but the sudden chill which he would be liable to meet with in coming out of a heated lecture-hall into the cold night air—the place will sure to be crammed; and, besides," speaking in a still softer key, "he is just now so extremely popular in the village, that if he *does* make his appearance there to-night he will be likely to meet with some sort of ovation, which, however gratifying it might be under other circumstances, would in this instance be most undesirable."

"Do you really think there is any chance of that, mamma?" asked Lily in accents of astonishment.

"I do, indeed, my dear! he barely escaped it this morning; and in his present state of health it would be most unwise to expose him to any additional excitement—he has had more than enough for one day already."

"Yes, I suppose so," returned Lily, thoughtfully.

"Still, I cannot see how we are to *prevent* his going," said Mrs. Hamilton, in a dreamy, reflective voice.

"Just leave him to me, mamma," exclaimed the younger lady, after a moment's hesitation; "*I'll* manage him!"

"*You*, my love?" replied her mother, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes; I have got a plan in my head," was the confident response.

"And what *is* your plan, darling?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, somewhat dubiously. "You are not, surely, thinking of proposing to remain at home yourself?" she added, in a tone of remonstrance, on perceiving the expression of Lily's face.

"Why not, mamma? It is, I assure you, the only way. If you, or any one else, were to stay, grandpapa would not *dream* of offering to remain with you; but in my case it is different. He still looks upon me as his own peculiar charge, and——"

"But he knows how anxious you are to attend this musical performance, and he will not *allow* you to make such a sacrifice."

"It is poor grandpapa himself who will

have to be sacrificed," laughingly retorted Lily. "I shall merely mention to him, in confidence, that you advised me to stay at home this morning and nurse my cold, and that I rebelled; and you will see what will happen. He will never rest until he has persuaded me to give up the idea of going out to-night; and, by way of making up to me in some degree for the pleasure I shall thus lose, he will himself remain to take care of me!"

"But, my dear child, you assured me your cold was so slight that it would do you no harm whatever to accompany us."

"Well, I don't believe it *has* done me any real harm," returned Lily, demurely. "Still, as you were saying just now, mamma dear, there's the night air to be considered—without speaking of the excitement of the thing; so I think upon the whole I had better not run any risk."

"You incorrigible girl!" began Mrs. Hamilton, with a smile and look which belied the words; but ere she could add more the sounding of the gong for luncheon suddenly reminded her of her duties as

hostess, and also awakened her to the consciousness that she had not yet divested herself of her out-door garments.

"Don't hurry, mamma," said the thoughtful daughter, laying down her own fur jacket and dainty little hat. "I will go to the drawing-room at once, and keep them all there until you are ready."

"I shall not be long, dear," was Mrs. Hamilton's comforting assurance, as she went to perform a hasty toilette; while Lily, true to her promise, joined their guests in the drawing-room, and tried to make her mother's absence as little noticed as possible.

She found a very happy party assembled there. Mr. Faversham, with Alfred at his side, was the centre of one group, and appeared to be engaged in the discussion of some subject which afforded equal interest to himself and those by whom he was surrounded. Colonel Hamilton stood at a distant table, turning over the contents of a portfolio of engravings for the benefit of Mrs. Welford and another lady. Madame Montague sat near them, gravely listening to

the conversation of an elderly gentleman who was doing his utmost to get her to understand the working of some philanthropic scheme in which he was evidently greatly interested; while little Ellen—Madame's only remaining pupil—was wholly occupied in watching the movements of her brother Henry as he proceeded to wind up a giant musical box, which he had that morning received from his papa.

Lily joined herself in the first instance to Mr. Faversham's party; then she went over to assist the Colonel in looking for a particular engraving which had contrived to elude his observation; and by the time it had been found, scrutinised, and commented on, the entrance of Mrs. Hamilton gave the signal for a general move to the dining-room.

Throughout the rest of the day Lily devoted herself to Mr. Faversham. She soon discovered that Mrs. Hamilton's conjectures were correct as to his being fully resolved on honouring the approaching festival with his own presence; and nothing remained for her but to carry out the little *ruse* she had

suggested for inducing him to alter his determination.

It is almost needless to say that she succeeded in her purpose; and for the first time in her life she congratulated herself on having a cold, seeing that it furnished her with so good an excuse for agreeing to Mr. Faversham's urgent entreaties that she would be content to spend a quiet evening with himself, instead of accompanying the others to the lecture-hall!

Lily went through a faint show of resistance before acquiescing in this arrangement; and however much Mrs. Hamilton may have regretted that her self-denying daughter should be deprived of a pleasure to which she had been looking forward for many weeks, she could not help being somewhat curious to know how the affair would be terminated; and an unbidden smile came to her lips as she marked Lily's delicate manœuvres, and heard Mr. Faversham making use of every argument he could conceive of to induce her to adopt the precautionary measures he had suggested.

It so happened, therefore, that Lily and

her grandpapa spent most of the evening alone.

There was an expression of supreme contentment upon the old man's face, as he smilingly appropriated the luxurious easy-chair which his darling had prepared for him, close to the blazing fire, in the brilliantly-lighted pink drawing-room, with soft cushions heaped around him, and his feet comfortably reposing upon the large, square footstool that was placed ready for their reception, and watched her take her seat at the piano, and begin one of those soft, silvery melodies, which she was in the habit of extemporising, as much for his amusement as her own.

How radiantly beautiful she looked, in her dinner dress of blue velvet, trimmed with exquisite white lace!

Such, at least, was the opinion of her aged relative; and such, also, if appearances may be relied on, was the opinion of some one else—a gentleman, who, having entered the room unperceived, stood for a few minutes as if spell-bound, with eyes and ears charmed and entranced, alternately gazing at the

lovely face and graceful figure of the fair performer, and listening to the sweet, harmonious strains which her gentle touch evoked from the lifeless keys!

Presently he came forward—a young and handsome man, with a frank, good-humoured, and intelligent countenance; a tall, well-knit frame; thick, wavy brown hair; and eyes of the deepest and darkest blue—and by his dress we instantly set him down as the new Vicar.

He is apparently no stranger, for Mr. Faversham welcomes him with a smile of pleasure, and, holding out both his hands, exclaims, in a tone of hearty satisfaction, "So you are come at last, Frederic!"

"I am, indeed," replies our old friend Frederic Singleton, for of course it is he; and he warmly returns the Squire's greeting, after which he approached Lily, and, bending over her, took her hand, and spoke a word or two in a low, subdued voice, and an involuntary tenderness of manner.

"You find us all alone," she said, rising from the piano with a somewhat heightened colour, and going over to the side of her

grandpapa; "every one, except ourselves and a few of the servants, is gone to the village."

"Had *you* no wish to be present at this musical entertainment?" demanded Mr. Faversham of his visitor, in rather a surprised tone.

"I *did* look in for a moment," answered the young man, with a conscious smile, and a half glance at Lily; "but when I discovered that you were absent I thought I would not waste any more time——"

"Waste any more time!" ejaculated the old man in the utmost amazement; "really you are very uncomplimentary to this lionised professor! Does he not play well?" he added anxiously.

"On the contrary, he is a most brilliant performer! still, I must say"—here he dropped his voice, and his eyes grew soft and gentle in their expression—"I have heard something since entering this room which I like quite as well."

"Ah, yes!" assented Mr. Faversham, in a tone which showed that he was not in any degree displeased at the comparison;

"Lily plays beautifully—no one can deny that!"

"Grandpapa was *so* disappointed at having to stay at home," observed Lily, with the hope of turning the conversation into a less embarrassing channel.

"Not exactly *disappointed*, my love," corrected Mr. Faversham; "I was, of course, sorry to hear of your not being well; but——"

"Not well!" cried the young clergyman, eyeing her with an expression of concentrated uneasiness.

"Just a slight cold," she answered, carelessly, though her face flushed and her eyes fell on meeting that eloquent glance; "so trifling, that it would not have done me the slightest harm to go out, only——"

She paused, and turned to Mr. Faversham, with an arch smile stealing over her lips, and *he* completed her explanation, by saying quickly, "Only I persuaded you to remain at home with me instead; that was it, dear, was it not?"

Lily assented; and Mr. Singleton, much relieved, was about to make some suitable

response, when a footman entered the room, and, presenting a note to Mr. Faversham, informed him that the bearer was waiting for an answer.

"Show him into the library," said the Squire, after casting a hasty glance at the superscription; "I will be with him immediately."

And, rising from his seat, he slowly crossed the apartment, merely turning round when he reached the door to remark, "Take care of her until I come back, Frederic," pointing significantly to Lily; "and see that she does not go into any draughts."

"I suspect it is some case of charity," said Lily, when she found herself left to a *tête-à-tête* with her former playmate; "he never refuses anything on New Year's-day."

"Talking of charity reminds me of something I wanted to ask you," returned Mr. Singleton, coming close up to her, and speaking in those accents of suppressed tenderness which never failed to call up the rich colour to her cheeks.

"I know what it is," she exclaimed, suddenly assuming a tone of playful badinage,

perhaps to conceal some deeper feeling; "you want a New Year's gift, and you shall have one;" and she held up a pretty jewel-handled paper-knife.

"That will not satisfy me at all," he replied, declining by a gesture the really valuable offering; "last year you gave me a flower, and promised me another."

"So I did," said Lily, with the air of one recalling some half-obliterated incident; "but that was a paltry gift compared with this;" and she again made a feint of advising him to accept the paper-knife.

"Do not trifle with me, Lily," murmured the young man, in a low, agitated voice.

"What do you want?" she asked, instantly becoming serious.

"The fulfilment of your promise!" was the concise reply; "another flower."

"Come, then, and take your choice," rejoined the young lady, mechanically leading the way into the winter garden; "there are plenty here."

"I see but one!" exclaimed Mr. Singleton, seizing her hands, and gazing at her with an expression of passionate fondness.

"Oh, Lily, dearest Lily, will you give me yourself?"

A half-startled look overspread her face as he made this impassioned appeal; and a faint, fluttering sigh escaped from her lips. She must have had a sort of intuitive perception of what was coming, and yet, now that it *had* come, she felt astonished and bewildered beyond measure. Almost without knowing what she did, she sank down upon one of the garden sofas, and before she could recover from the state of mental confusion into which she had been plunged, her lover had seated himself beside her; and *there*, amidst the birds and the flowers, the softened light of the Chinese lamps, and the murmur of the little streamlet, rippling among the green-leafed ferns, he told her the story of his love.

"Oh, Frederic!" she faltered forth at length, in obedience to his earnest entreaty that she would give him some word of hope or encouragement. It was all she could say; but she allowed him to retain possession of her hands, and he knew by this mute token of confidence, as well as by the smile, which,

like a ray of golden sunlight, came flashing over her blushing yet tearful countenance, that his suit had prospered.

Then his arm stole gently around her, and his lips were, for the first time, pressed to the rosebud mouth, and—they were engaged!

Not quite, though, it appeared; for Lily suddenly started up with the whispered exclamation, "There's grandpapa—you must ask him."

And the young man became at once aware that Mr. Faversham was standing at the open door, looking about for them.

"Do you notice any alterations?" inquired the Squire, as they rejoined him in the pink drawing-room.

"To tell you the truth, I have been thinking of something else," was Frederic Singleton's frank avowal. "Will you ever forgive me," he went on, in a voice which, in spite of his efforts at self-control, was quivering with repressed emotion, "when I confess that I have been trying to rob your garden of its fairest and most beautiful flower?"

Did Mr. Faversham suspect anything?

He did. His eye caught the look of un-

wonted excitement; his ear noted the tones of tremulous delight; and straight to his heart came the consciousness of what had occurred.

"You say you have been *trying?*" he said; and there was a marked emphasis upon the word.

"Yes; and, thank God, I have succeeded!" was the fervent response, accompanied by a glance of the most devoted affection.

"Succeeded!" reiterated Mr. Faversham. "Oh, Lily!"—addressing her sadly, almost reproachfully—"are you going to desert me in my old age?"

"No! oh, no!" she cried, rushing over to him, and hiding her blushing face against his shoulder; "I will never leave you, grandpapa, until you tell me to go."

"My darling! my own true darling!" murmured the old man, laying his trembling hand fondly and caressingly over the lovely head, "do you really care for him?"

A soft-breathed whisper conveyed the answer to his listening ear.

"And you," he continued, turning sharply round upon Mr. Singleton, and speaking

under the influence of some overpowering emotion; "are you *quite sure* that you love her entirely for her own sake, irrespective of her worldly circumstances or position?"

"I thought you knew me better than to deem such a question needful," returned the clergyman, with grave distinctness, while a flush of honest indignation swept over his manly countenance.

"Forgive me, Frederic!" rejoined the other, hastily, and as if ashamed of his momentary suspiciousness; "I *do* know you better, my boy! I know you to be a gentleman, and, what is better still, a *Christian;* and, if it is any satisfaction to you to be assured of the fact, I can truthfully affirm that there is not another man in the world to whom I would so willingly consign my darling as yourself."

"Thank you!" was the hearty response; and the old man and the young one cordially grasped each other's hands; while Lily testified *her* gratitude by imprinting a fond kiss upon Mr. Faversham's forehead, and stroking his aged cheek with her soft, white hand.

"Of course I can only speak for myself," proceeded the Squire, after a pause; "but I do not suppose you will be likely to meet with much opposition from any one else."

"I am, at all events, sure of Mrs. Hamilton's assistance," smilingly answered the accepted lover.

"In that case the battle is won," was Mr. Faversham's decisive rejoinder; "for she and her husband agree in *everything*. But here they come," he added, presently, as the sound of carriage-wheels announced their return.

By the time they entered the room, however, Lily had contrived to make her escape.

* * * * *

Frederic Singleton pleaded hard that the marriage might take place at once, but Lily insisted on putting it off until the following July, as she was very desirous of having her dear friend Amy Singleton as one of her bridesmaids, and knew that the doctors would not sanction her leaving Mentone (where she was passing the winter) until the warm weather should have arrived.

At last it came, and with it came also Sir

Arthur and Lady Singleton, accompanied by Amy and her two younger sisters, on a visit to the Hall. These three, in addition to Lily's own sister, were her only bridesmaids, and to each of them Mr. Faversham presented a lily-shaped brooch, composed of an equal number of pearls and diamonds; while to the bride herself he gave, among other costly gifts too numerous to specify, a similar ornament, with the one exception that *her* flower was made up *entirely* of diamonds.

After the wedding ceremony was completed, the happy pair started for Switzerland, and Sir Arthur, who had acted as officiating clergyman on the auspicious occasion, undertook to perform his son's duty for him until their return.

* * * * *

Crossley lived to a good old age. For many years she enjoyed her *otium cum dignitate* in an easy chair and private sitting-room. She was greatly addicted to "tea and gossip;" but, though the tea was strong, the gossip was very harmless, for, as she grew older, she became less stern and austere in manner, and was, on the whole, inclined

to look more leniently upon the faults and failings of her fellow-creatures than she had been in days of yore.

On one subject she was really enthusiastic, and that was—Lily! though the more ill-natured of her acquaintances were wont to insinuate that, in praising *her*, Crossley was indirectly paying a compliment to herself.

Be this as it may, it is quite certain that the *ci-devant* housekeeper entertained the greatest respect and admiration for her former charge, and whenever she heard any one speaking of her in terms of admiration or esteem, she would invariably reply, "You are quite right; she is one of a thousand!" adding immediately afterwards, with the most amusing self-complacency, "*I had the bringing up of her, you know!*"

* * * * *

Are any of my readers interested in the fortunes of Eliza, the contumacious housemaid, whose flightiness and general contempt for all lawful authority proved so excessively hurtful to poor Crossley's dignity? Under Mrs. Hamilton's firm yet gentle sway, her character and conduct has undergone so

marked an improvement, that a rumour is current in the servants' hall to the effect that Colonel Hamilton's valet—a staid, middle-aged, sober-minded individual, who has accompanied his master in all his travels, and has hitherto eschewed matrimony as a responsibility too burdensome to be lightly engaged in—is now seriously considering the expediency of forthwith proposing to make her his wife; and although the saucy girl tosses her head, and scornfully repudiates the idea of her ever learning to care for such a grave, matter-of-fact, weather-beaten personage as the worthy valet, little doubt is entertained by those who know her best as to what her final answer will be in the event of his carrying out his present intentions regarding her.

* * * * *

Time flies. Lily has long been settled down in the pleasantly-situated Vicarage—the very model of what a clergyman's wife should be—a help-meet for her husband; a faithful and affectionate mother; a kind friend to the sick and the sorrowful, the poor and the needy; loving, and beloved by all

who come within the reach of her beneficent influence.

And Mary—what of her?

She has never left her mistress, and, if report speaks truly, she never will. The lapse of years seems only to have deepened and intensified her affection for the lovely being who had come like some Heaven-sent messenger to cheer and comfort her when she was on the verge of despair; and Lily regards her more in the light of a friend than a servant, so completely has she identified herself with the joys and the sorrows of every member of their well-ordered household.

With the children Mary is an especial favourite; and often in the quiet twilight hour—when the shadows of evening are rapidly gathering around the peaceful Vicarage, and no sound is heard save the rustling of the wind, as it fitfully plays among the foliage of the distant trees—does she steal away to the nursery, and tell them the story of

MR. FAVERSHAM'S NEW YEAR'S GUEST.

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